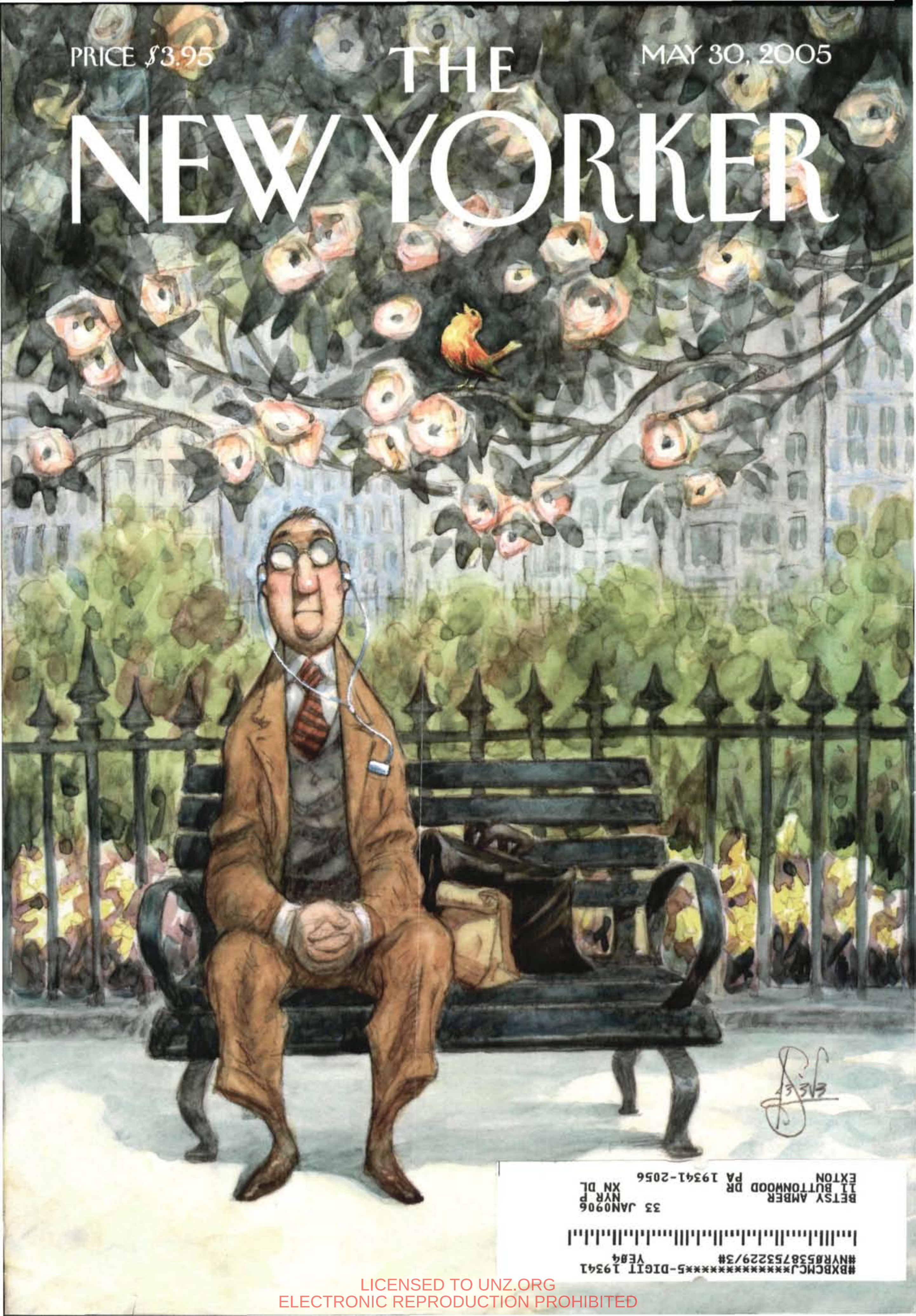

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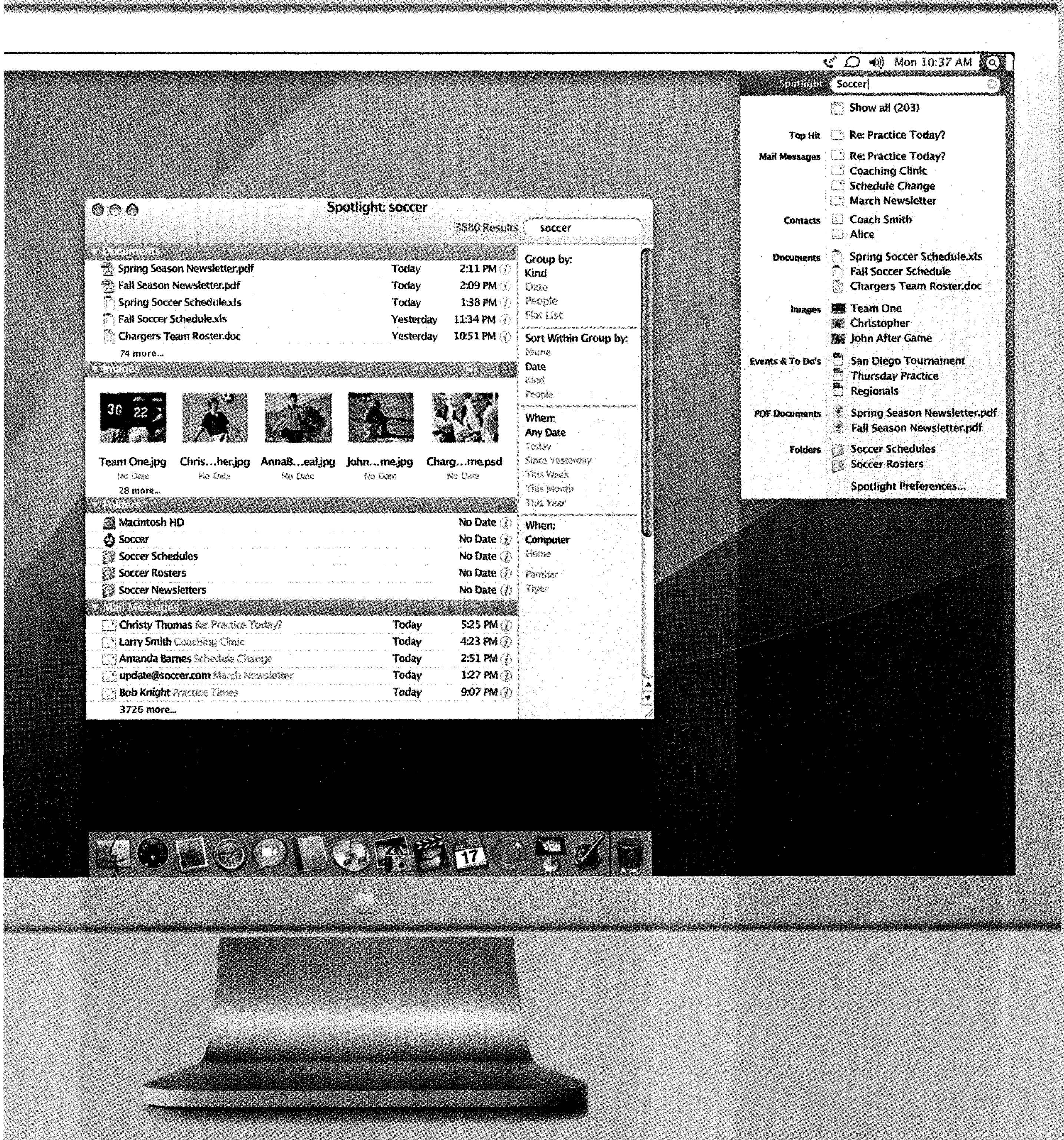
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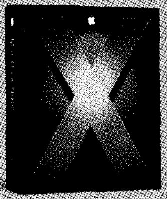

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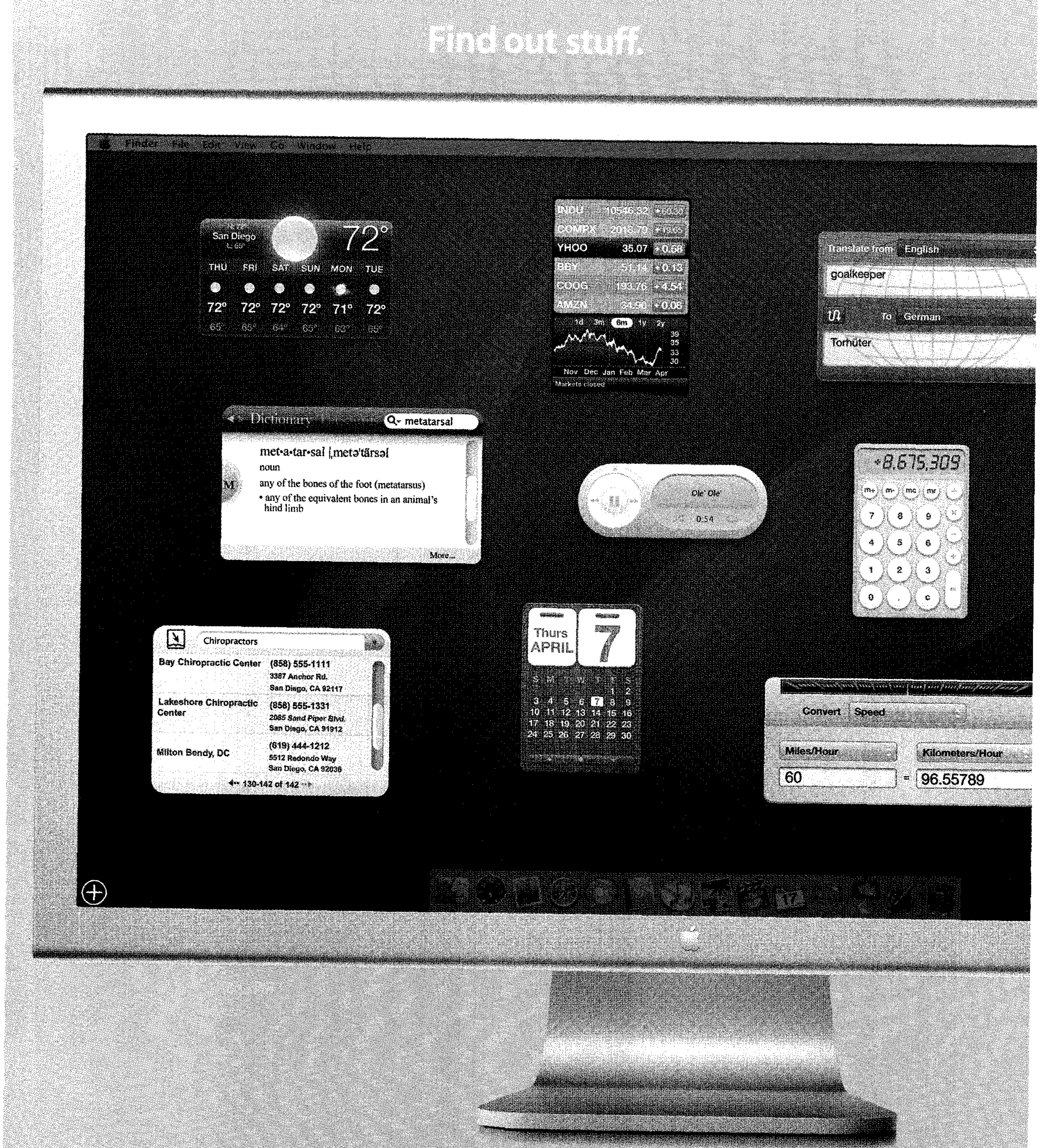
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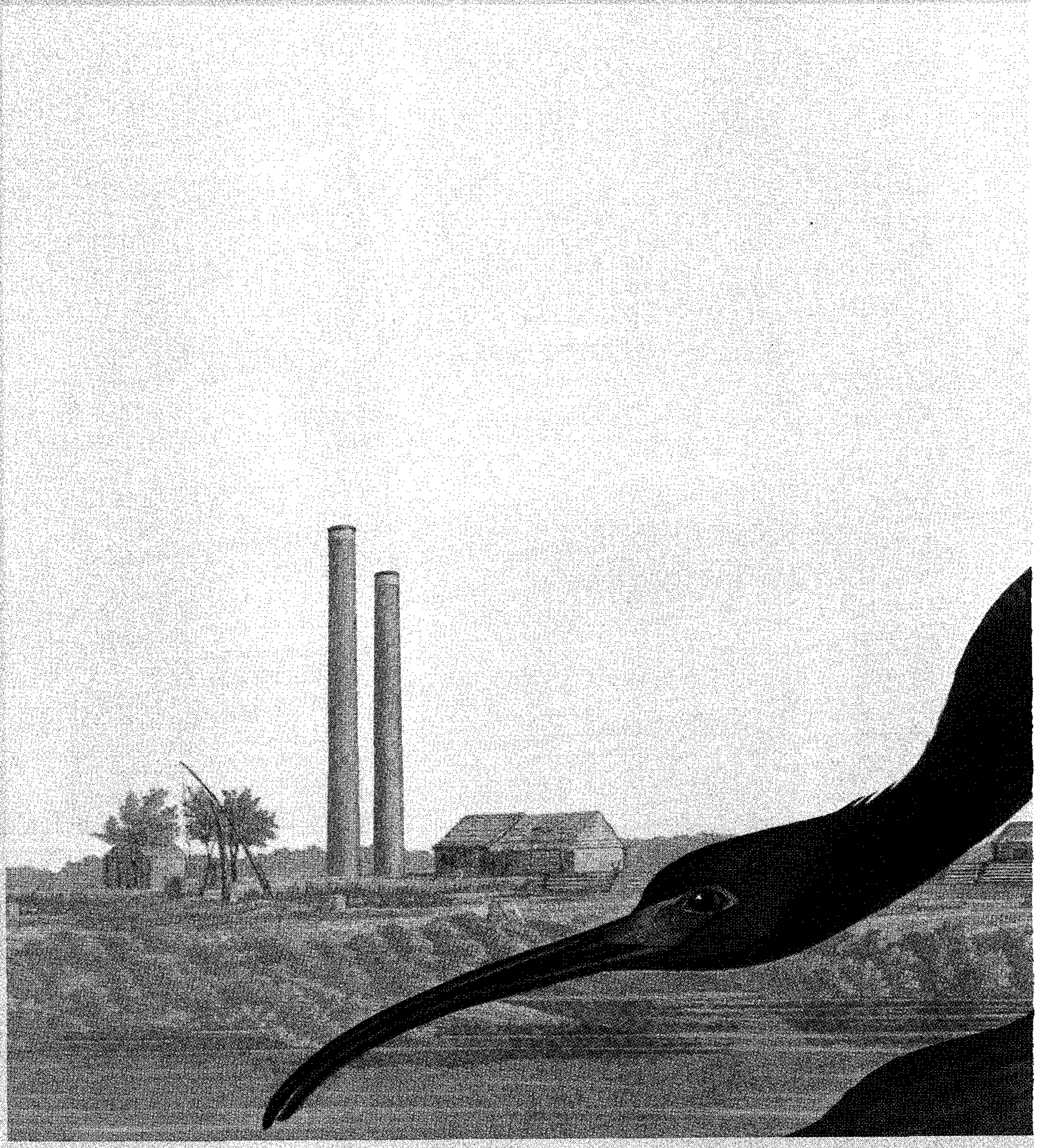

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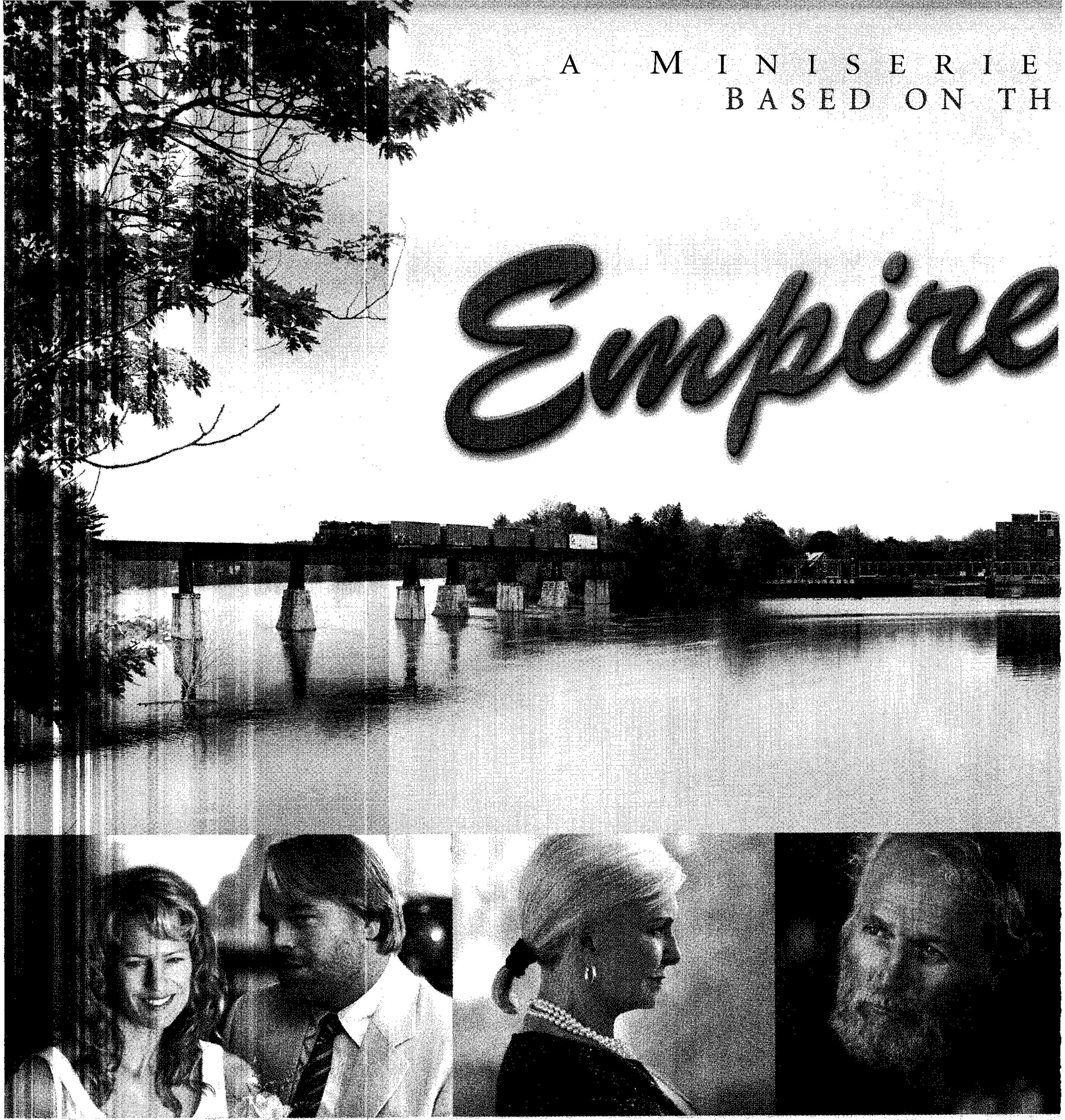

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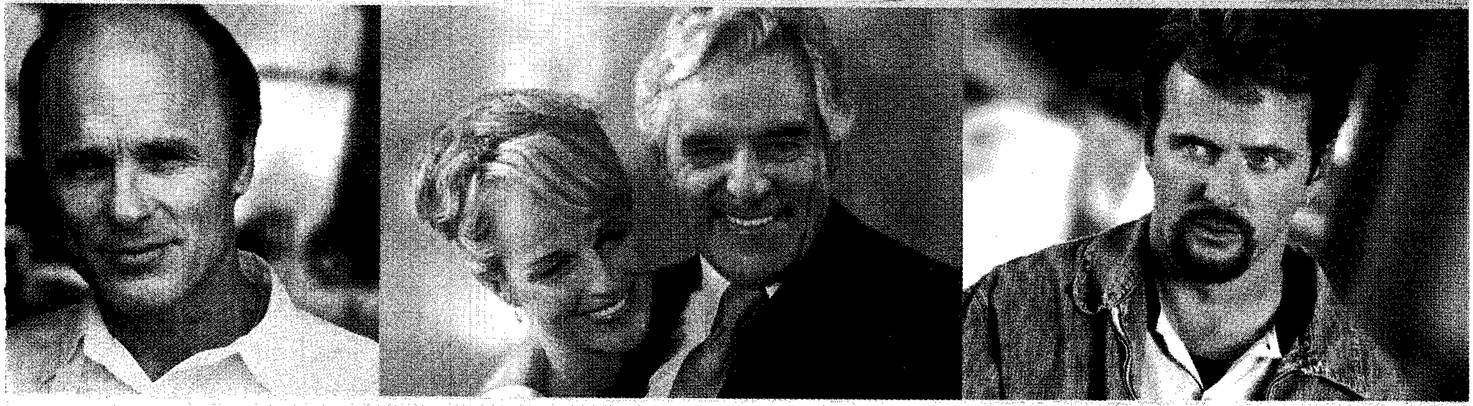

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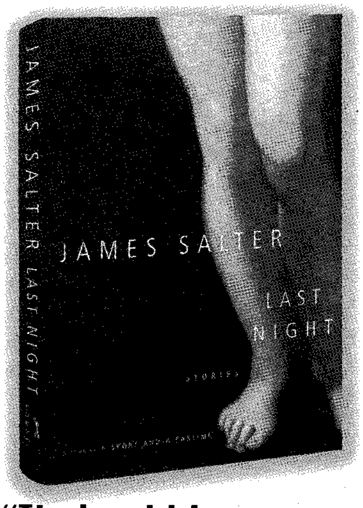

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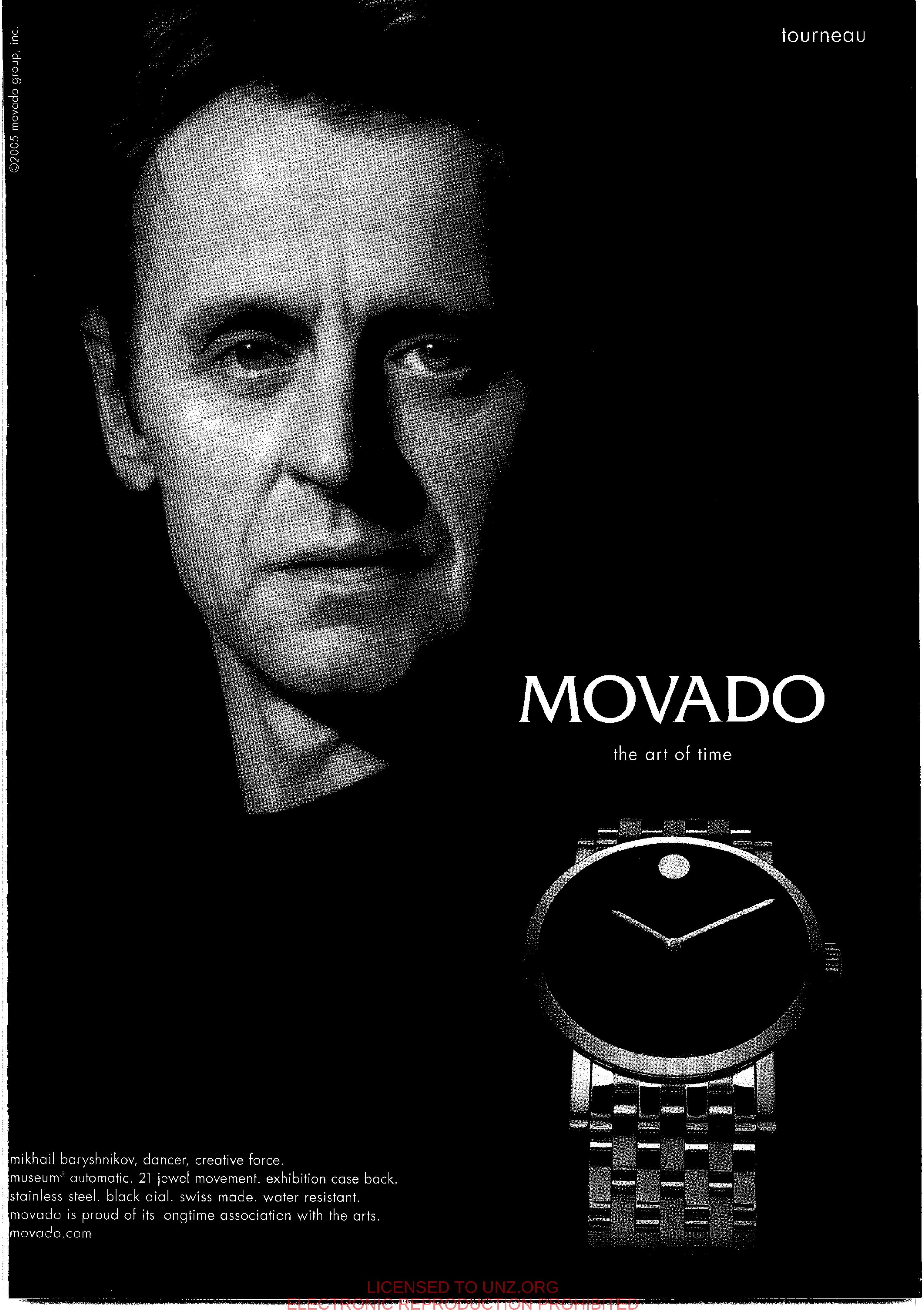
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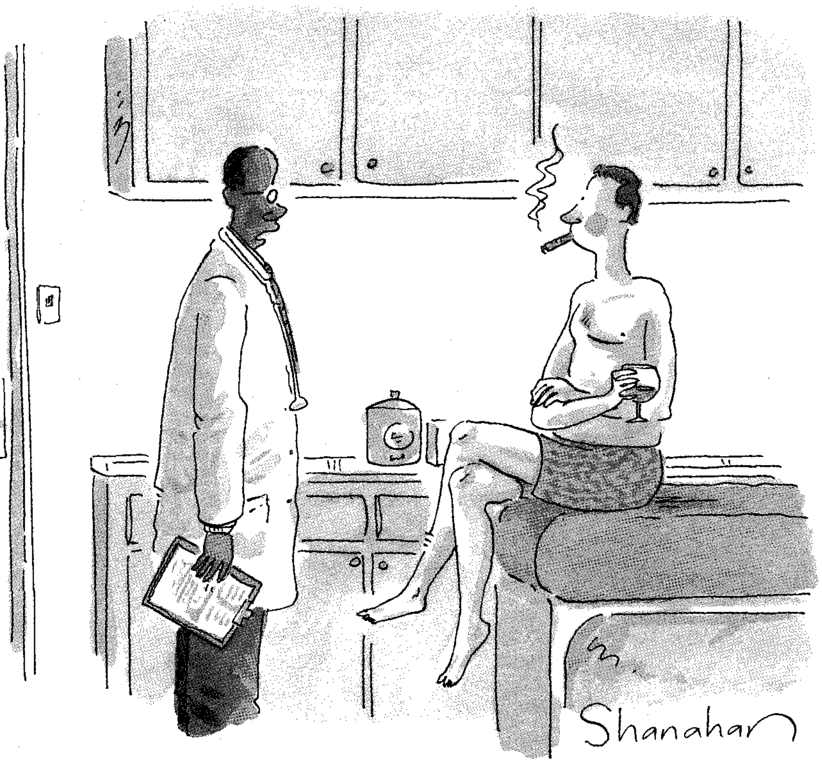
David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 98), a film critic for the magazine, is the author of "Great Books" and "American Sucker," a memoir. ♦



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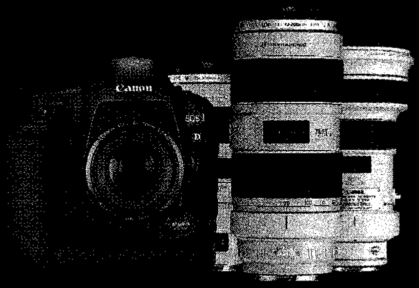

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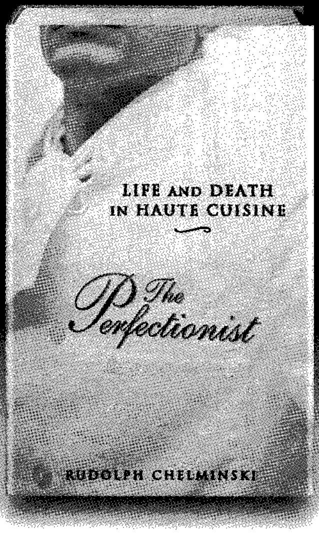

"Loiseau seems likely to become a mordant icon of the eternal war between critics and cooks…[Chelminski] has a **moving story to tell, with universal implications: the downfall of the artist through perfectionism and paranoia."**
—ADAM GOPNIK, from *The New Yorker, "Dining Out: The Food Critic at Table"*

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CATHOLICS AND CONSCIENCE

Jane Kramer writes that, during the past twenty-five years, Joseph Ratzinger "maintained, with his friend and predecessor, that a well-ordered conscience is one that submits to the authority of the magisterium" (Comment, May 2nd). However, following Vatican II, Ratzinger wrote a commentary on what the Council said about conscience: "Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official Church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism." The priority of conscience was clearly articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas and is an integral, unsuppressible part of Catholic teaching when its proper role is recognized. Some bishops and numerous theologians were able to dissent from the teaching of Paul VI on birth control, and today recommend condom usage when one partner is H.I.V.-positive, on precisely this basis.
Paul Surlis
Crofton, Md.

The question of where to locate the conscience is not what separates the perspective of generous-spirited secular humanism, like that expressed by Kramer, from that of Catholic orthodoxy. The matter of conscience is resolved: at the end of the day, it is situated in the person and it has primacy. The Church's Vatican II encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* teaches that the "conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths." The real question is one of presuppositions. Kramer mentions the desire of many Catholics for "the right to exercise their own consciences on matters that do not concern faith so much as the realities of their intimate lives." I think that quite a large number of Catholics like me believe there are no matters of conscience that do not concern faith, our intimate lives most of all.
Peter L. Sloan
Weston Jesuit School of Theology
Cambridge, Mass.

Kramer's analysis of the Vatican's obsession with protecting its authority is thoroughly on point. In 1980, Pope John Paul II ordered the Pontifical Academy of Science (an oxymoron that recalls George Bernard Shaw's observation that a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms) to review the case of Galileo Galilei, who, in 1633, was forced by the Italian Inquisition to retract his heretical teaching that the earth revolved around the sun. Eventually, after twelve years of deliberation, the Church conceded that Galileo was right. But, as late as 1988, nothing had been done, and a Vatican official told a reporter for the Los Angeles *Times*, "The case is closed." The Holy See long considered it more important to ignore reality and retain the confidence of the faithful than to admit a mistake and risk losing that confidence.
Forrest G. Wood
Bakersfield, Calif.

Kramer asserts that the "central question" of Vatican II was "the relation between God and conscience." The central question of Vatican II was actually aggiornamento—modernization. The Church needed fresh teaching on its liturgy and its relations with other denominations and religions. However, Vatican II did not change Catholic teaching on God and conscience. The Church has always taught two things regarding conscience: first, that it is the ultimate arbiter of truth, and, second, that it is fallible and must be informed by and converted to the mind of Christ.
Andy Simons
Seattle, Wash.

•

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"In the beginning we were happy.
And we were always excessive.
So in the beginning we were happy
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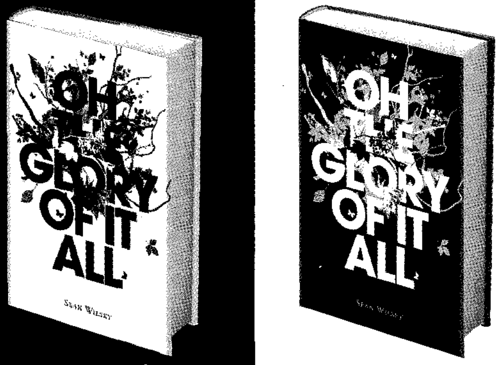
GLORY
OF IT
ALL

SEAN WILSEY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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
"THE ARGUMENT"

Melissa Leo, Jay O. Sanders, and John Rothman star in a new play by Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros about a couple at a crossroads in their relationship. Maria Mileaf directs. (Opens May 25; see page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE
MOOGFEST

What would rock music be without the Moog synthesizer? That question will be answered—or, as the case may be, not answered—during Moogfest, the annual event that celebrates the instrument that Robert Moog invented back in 1963. Moog, who grew up in Queens but now lives in Asheville, North Carolina, plans to attend the event, which will be held at B. B. King's Blues Club & Grill and will feature performances by Edgar Winter, Don Preston, and others. (May 31; see page 18.)

ART
BANKS VIOLETTE

Violette, born in Ithaca in 1973, has long explored themes of power and spirituality in his art—past works have employed the iconography of Black Metal music. His first solo museum show, at the Whitney, continues in that vein and includes a ruined church cast from salt. (Opens May 27; see page 21.)

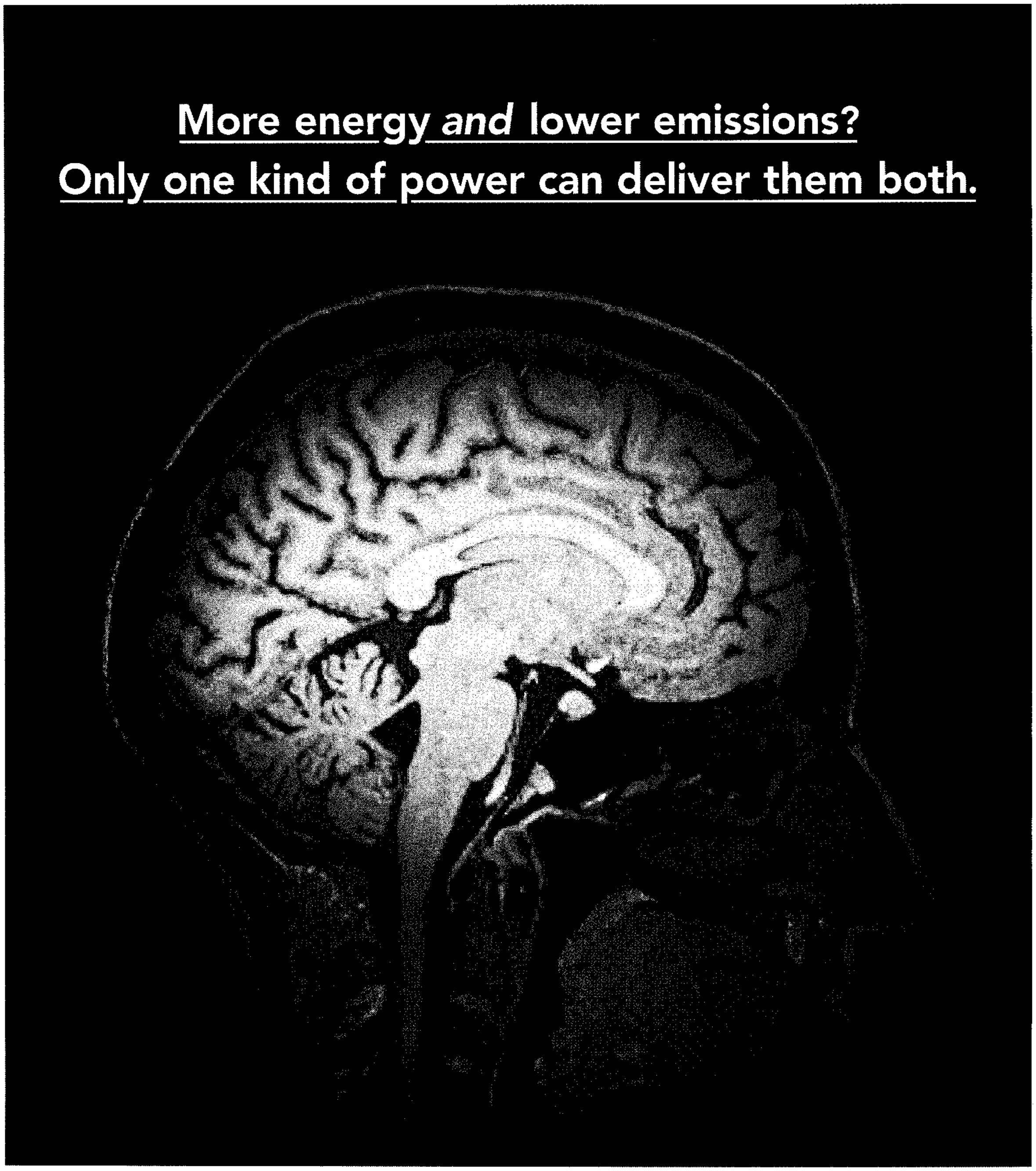
CLASSICAL MUSIC
MATT HAIMOVITZ

Haimovitz's cello is a 1710 Matteo Gofriller, but his ideas about classical music are contemporary—for the last several years, he has tried to bring classical music into coffeehouses, night clubs, and other venues usually devoted to popular music. This week at the Knitting Factory, he anchors two performances of "Scherzo Grosso," a new concerto for cello and big band by David Sanford, whose Pittsburgh Collective will play alongside the cellist. (May 29; see page 24.)

READINGS AND TALKS
ISABEL ALLENDE

Allende has a new novel that traces the history of Zorro. This week, she discusses it and her trilogy for young-adult readers. (May 25, New York Public Library; see page 30.)

The Park Slope, Brooklyn, performance space Barbès. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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AFTER THE NIGHT AND THE MUSIC
A new work by Elaine May, about life in this millennium, stars Jeanne Berlin and J. Smith-Cameron. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE ARGUMENT
The Vineyard Theatre presents the première of a play by Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros about a couple having romantic difficulties. Melissa Leo and Jay O. Sanders star. Directed by Maria Mileaf. Opens May 25 at 8. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

BFE
Julia Cho's new play, about a dysfunctional Asian-American family, is the season closer for Playwrights Horizons. Directed by Gordon Edelstein. In previews. Opens May 31 at 7. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
Chekhov's classic drama, in a new adaptation by Tom Donaghy, comes to the Atlantic Theatre. Scott Zigler directs. Previews begin May 25. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Somerset Maugham's comedy, set in London in the twenties, about a straying husband, a scheming wife, and their urbane circle of friends. Mark Brokaw directs a sparkling cast, led by Lynn Redgrave, Kate Burton, Kathryn Meisle, and Michael Cumpsty. Previews begin May 27. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE PARIS LETTER
A Wall Street macher is dogged by secrets from his past, in the New York première of a play by Jon Robin Baitz, presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. John Glover, Michele Pawk, and Ron Rifkin lead the cast. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THRILL ME: THE LEOPOLD & LOEB STORY
The York Theatre presents a new musical by Stephen Dolginoff, about the erotic friendship between two rich young Chicago men that led to a brutal murder in 1924, prompting the "trial of the century." Two previews on May 25. Opens May 26 at 8. (Saint Peter's Church at Citigroup, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

WORK
A farce about corporate America by Charlotte Meehan, directed by Jim Simpson. In previews. (The Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

ALTAR BOYZ
In this lampoon of the boy-band phenomenon, the lyricist-songwriters Gary Adler and Michael Patrick Walker hit below the belt without being vulgar in MTV-ready songs with infectious beats and witty lyrics. The spoofy synchronized break dancing, choreographed by Christopher Gattelli, would be funny even without the merciless score. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
Joining the festival this week are "The Pull of Negative Gravity," a drama about a Welsh soldier wounded in the Iraq war; "Tabloid Caligula," a comedy by Darren Murphy about an aging criminal; and "Mortal Ladies Possessed," an adaptation by Matthew Hurt of stories by Tennessee Williams, which stars Linda Marlowe. (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

DRESS SUITS TO HIRE
This collaboration between Holly Hughes, Peggy Shaw, and Lois Weaver from 1987 is being remounted at La Mama in honor of the Split Britches company's twenty-fifth anniversary. (74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

DRUMSTRUCK
An interactive spectacle that provides each audience member with a two-foot-tall drum comes to Dodger Stages from South Africa, where it originated in a Johannesburg café nearly a decade ago. Directed by David Warren. (340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

FLIGHT
The eventful and controversial life of Charles Lindbergh is the subject of a new play by Garth Wingfield, presented by the Melting Pot Theatre Company. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
Joe Mantello directs a pitch-perfect revival of David Mamet's majestic play about a group of Chicago real-estate brokers who fight to get the leads, get ahead of each other, close the sale, and get on the board. It's a sort of three-card monte of verbal manipulation, in which words are decoys of self-interest that connect the speakers to nothing but their own craven desire. From the first beat of this production, the play swings; the virtuoso cast—Alan Alda, Liev Schreiber, Gordon Clapp, Jeffrey Tambor, Frederick Weller, Tom Wopat, Jordan Lage—sends it solid. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/9/05.) (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

HOWIE THE ROOKIE
Enter with your ears pricked to hear Mark O'Rowe's exhilarating, scrappy Irish idiolects, delivered by two of his countrymen. O'Rowe, who wrote the film "Intermission," likes to wrestle his characters to the ground and pummel them until they reveal their inner conflicts. This play, which feels a bit like an exercise, takes the form of two interlocking dramatic monologues, presented back to back. Mark Byrne plays Howie Lee, a wastrel whose conscience kicks in too late. The plucky and appealing John O'Callaghan plays the Rookie, a ladies' man whose charm is outpaced by his bad luck. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 212-868-4444.)

IVANOV
Chekhov's play about a widower who tries to find love with a younger woman is staged by the National Asian-American Theatre Company. Jonathan Bank directs. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, Lexington Ave. at 23rd St. 646-312-4085.)

KNOCK ON WOOD
The Israeli actor and writer Samuel Calderon brings his one-man play about his experiences as a soldier in the Yom Kippur War to New York. (13th Street Repertory, 50 W. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

LABAPALOOZA!
Puppeteers demonstrate their craftsmanship and fervid imaginations at the Lab's sixth annual Mini Festival of New Puppet Theatre. Among the dramas presented are: "Purity Tank," about a disastrous molasses spill in 1919; "La Môme Bijoux," a portrait of an aging coquette, inspired by the photos of Brassaï; and "The Christine Jorgensen Story," which charts the transformations of the world's best-known transsexual. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through May 29. For full festival details, visit www.stannswarehouse.org.)

THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA
This lovely and complicated musical by Craig Lucas (book) and Adam Guettel (music and lyrics) is based on Elizabeth Spencer's novella about a Southern lady who takes Clara, her beautiful but intellectually impaired daughter, to Florence, where she stumbles into a love affair. Clara is played by the clear-voiced Kelli O'Hara with just the right mix of guilelessness and passion; Victoria Clark, a genteel powerhouse, plays her mother, who struggles with her conscience as her daughter fights for her right to love. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

MEMORY HOUSE
Dianne Wiest stars in a new play by Kathleen Tolan, about a woman whose college-bound adopted daughter confronts her about the ethics of international adoption. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MISS JULIE
A new adaptation of the Strindberg play, by Craig Lucas ("The Light in the Piazza," "Reckless"), is

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SCREENING PROCESS

"Same Time, Next Year" is not just the name of a movie Alan Alda starred in twenty-five years ago: these days, it could be the catchphrase of the Tony Awards selection process. The nominators' preference for popular film and television actors is becoming as predictable as the cast of a summer blockbuster. Last year, Hugh Jackman, Kevin Kline, Phylicia Rashad, and Anne Heche—all screen stars—got Tony nods. When the nominations for the fifty-ninth annual Tony Awards were announced, two weeks ago, many Hollywood names appeared among them, including Alda for "Glengarry Glen Ross" and Billy Crudup for "The Pillowman." These were fine—even superb—performances, and yet they raise a tough question: are the actors being admired as much for being themselves as for portraying their characters? Many veteran stage actors were recognized this season as well, including Cherry Jones for "Doubt," Victoria Clark for "The Light in the Piazza," and Sara Ramirez for "Monty Python's Spamalot," but the uneasy suspicion lingers that on Broadway, the stars of the stage are the stars of the screen.

—*Hilton Als*

LAURIE ROSENWALD

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based on a translation by Anders Cato, who directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

THE PASSION OF THE CRAWFORD
In her latest glam-o-rama, Lypsinka (a.k.a. John Epperson) pays biting homage to Joan Crawford, the screen icon and exemplar of feral maternal instinct. Using a recording of Crawford's 1973 interview at Town Hall, along with other sound clips, Lypsinka whips the star's famous temper into a froth of bitchy fun. (Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 5.)

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER
In Oliver Goldsmith's eighteenth-century comedy, a young Londoner (Brian Hutchison) mistakes his country-squire host, Mr. Hardcastle (the excellent Remak Ramsay), for an innkeeper and, accordingly, treats his daughter, Kate (Danielle Ferland), like a pert barmaid. The director, Charlotte Moore, has tacked on an awkward prologue, but amusing performances by Ramsay, Patricia O'Connell (as Mr. Hardcastle's wife), and Tim Smallwood, as Lumpkin, their bumptious but clever son, preserve the neatness of the satire. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

SONGS FROM AN UNMADE BED
A song cycle about the life of a gay New Yorker, sung by Michael Winther, has music by seventeen composers—including Joseph Thalken, Jeffrey Stock, and Jenny Giering—and lyrics by Mark Campbell ("Volpone"). David Schweizer directs. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUMMERWORKS 2005
The final show of the Clubbed Thumb theatre company's annual festival of new plays is "Dearest Eugenia Haggis," a tale about three misfits, written by Ann Marie Healy and directed by Melissa Kievman. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Closes May 28.)

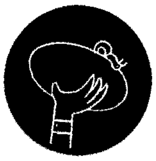
TERRORISM
Elizabeth Marvel stars in the American première of a dark comedy by Vladimir and Oleg Presnyakov about the psychic burden imposed by the fear of terrorism. The show, a hit in Moscow, is a coproduction of the New Group and the Play Company and is directed by Will Frears. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin's satisfying and silly musical comedy has moved to Broadway. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALL WEAR BOWLERS:** HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. (Closes May 29.) **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **BOOZY:** 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. (Through May 28.) **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DESSA ROSE:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HURLYBURLY:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **JULIUS CAESAR:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ON GOLDEN POND:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **A PICASSO:** City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SCORE:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. (Through June 5.) **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **TWELVE ANGRY MEN:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.

TABLES FOR TWO
CRU



24 Fifth Ave., at 9th St. (212-529-1700)—Three key facts define Cru: its wine list is world class; its chef, Shea Gallante, is among the most gifted in the city; and its location, on the ground floor of a handsome apartment building a few blocks north of Washington Square, is notorious for the speed with which fine restaurants wither and die there, like exotic plants in unsuitable soil, a phenomenon that Cru seems uncomfortably aware of.

Cru has around sixty-five thousand bottles of wine and some thirty-five hundred selections, all drawn from the cellars of the owner, Roy Welland. In the sedate cocobolo-panelled dining room, serious men surrounded by decanters embark on elaborate tastings. Two thick volumes list bottles from three centuries (a jeroboam of 1899 Lafite-Rothschild costs $13,000) and even try for some enological puns—a 1970 Pétrus, for example, is priced at $1,970. (There are also plenty of excellent affordable offerings.) The Italian food created by Gallante, an alumnus of Bouley who was recently named one of the best newcomers in American cuisine by *Food & Wine*, is as impressive as the vintages. A meal begins with three sets of amuse-bouche: one evening, these included a tiny taco filled with subtle beet purée and a foam-strewn apricot mousse containing a stratum of balsamic-soaked tapioca. But the simpler dishes—tortelloni enclosing sweetbreads and lamb shoulder that is shredded with a feathery delicacy—may be even more memorable.

Gallante has a thing for crudo (the neo-Italian riposte to sushi) and delights in lacing his raw fish with surprising, successful flavors. Langoustine comes in gin sauce, while blue mackerel is drizzled with chive oil. Unfortunately, the menu's bias toward fish makes for a less than ideal accompaniment to the wines. Of the main courses, only the duck and pork dishes (both served in gratifying, hearty reductions) can really hold their own against the gigantic reds. Cru appears to have staked out a battlefield in order to avoid the fate of its predecessors, but it is the superb menu and unmatchable wine list that are at war with each other. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $37.)

—Leo Carey

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAGGOT INN
82 W. 3rd St. (212-477-0622)—May 27: **Van Hayride.** The honky-tonk guitarist and barrel-voiced singer Jack Grace and the nuanced and well-travelled guitarist Jim Campilongo serve up classic Van Halen tunes, country style.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—May 28: The music journalist, Africanist, and guitarist **Banning Eyre** visits Zimbabwe. Mondays through the end of June: **Las Rubias Del Norte** rearrange Latin big-band music for a handful of instruments, including the glockenspiel.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 30: **Deicide** hail from sunny Florida, where their blasphemous death metal has the locals worried. Here in New York, though, you have to wonder if anyone will notice them. May 31: **Moogfest.** Robert Moog, the father of the analog synthesizer that changed the face of twentieth-century popular music, gets fêted by some of the Moog's greatest practitioners, including **Edgar Winter, Will Calhoun, Don Preston,** and many others.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 25: The **Boredoms,** the first name in Japanese noise rock, are an Osaka ensemble known for surreal and often impenetrable music—their latest album, "Seadrum/House of Sun," consists of two twenty-plus-minute kitchen-sink tracks. The band, which occupies an exalted place in the U.S. underground, also influences popular culture. The Flaming Lips' 2002 hit album, "Yoshimi vs. the Pink Robots," for example, is named for the Boredoms' drummer. May 28: The notorious Hollywood starlet Juliette Lewis stops by with her band, **Juliette & the Licks.** They play rollicking garage rock that's enhanced by Lewis's lack of inhibition. She gets as sweaty as Iggy Pop did in his heyday. May 29: Ska music has seen several waves of popularity since Jimmy Cliff and the like first pioneered the genre, in the early sixties. The **Slackers,** a local outfit, are still riding the last one, from the nineties. With their New Jersey brothers in rhythm **New Blood Revival.** May 31-June 2: The Beatles cover band the **Fab Faux.**

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—May 26: **Andy Friedman,** a visual artist (his cartoons have appeared in this magazine under the name Larry Hat) turned guitar-toting, high-minded musician, kicks off an extended residency, backed by his five-piece band, the Other Failures, and projections of his drawings and photographs. He's here on Thursday nights through July 7.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 25-26: Despite its name, **Slightly Stoopid** is a surprisingly versatile band that merges straight-ahead acoustic rock with reggae, hip-hop, and punk. With the longtime genre-blenders **Fishbone.** May 27-28: The **Dark Star Orchestra** recreates the shows of the Grateful Dead, song by song, and you don't need to be on drugs to feel like it's Jerry and company onstage rather than a bunch of middle-aged guys from Chicago. The Orchestra recently lost its co-founding keyboardist, Scott Larned, who died of a heart attack while on tour, but they are back on the road in the true spirit of their favorite band. May 31: **Buckwheat Zydeco** is known as a master accordionist, but his first love is the Hammond B-3 organ, which he displays to great effect on his new studio album, "Jackpot!" But he hasn't given up exuberant renditions of the southern-Louisiana party music that made him famous. He's here with the slide-guitar master **Sonny Landreth.**

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JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 31: **One Ring Zero** is two guys from Brooklyn who turn out a frenetic klezmer-Gypsy-midway-music hybrid using the accordion, toy piano, various household appliances, and other exotic instruments. Somehow the duo have become the darlings of the local literary set, and their latest album, "As Smart As We Are," features lyrics by Jonathan Lethem, Margaret Atwood, Paul Auster, and other writers. They're joined by the pan-Balkan punk chamber group **Barbez,** which for its part crafts a beguiling postmodern sound thanks to a theremin and the stellar vocals of the St. Petersburg native Ksenia Vidyaykina. The **Mingus Orchestra** is here Thursdays, with sets at 11:30 and 1:30 A.M.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—May 28: The New York-based singer **Kaïssa,** who was born in Cameroon, fuses Afro-Brazilian rhythms with politically charged lyrics that she delivers in her native Douala. The bassist **Francis Mbappe,** who has played with the likes of Manu Dibango and Cesaria Evora, opens.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 25: **Th' Legendary Shack Shakers** cook up a wild brew that's two parts rockabilly, one part punk. May 26: The local rock band **Shelby,** like its namesake muscle car, delivers a thrilling ride. It's here with songs from its forthcoming album, "The Luxury of Time," opening a night of strenuous guitar pop that includes the Boston post-punk quartet **Aberdeen City** and the young Nottingham, England, outfit **Amusement Parks on Fire.** May 31: The British band the **22-20's** takes its name from the old Skip James song about a jilted lover and his choice of firearm, but it's not just a blues band, unless, of course, the Rolling Stones are one too. Later that night, **Say Hi to Your Mom,** a Brooklyn-based emo-quirk band that's the work of one Eric Elbogen, celebrates the release of its latest album, "Ferocious Mopes."

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—May 26 and May 29: Two evenings of bloody-knuckled nostalgia await as **Killing Time/Raw Deal** reunites. One of the first local bands to inject hardcore punk with a weightier, more metallic sound, Killing Time makes burly rock for people who consider live music a contact sport. May 30: **Inspectah Deck,** a founding member of the Staten Island-based rap conglomerate the Wu Tang Clan, has also lent his talents to many of the group members' solo projects. Though his 1999 solo album, "Uncontrolled Substance," never reached the heights of his Wu Tang days, his intense verbal skill is vast and undiminished. He performs here with **Afu-Ra,** a New York m.c. who blends intelligent rhythms with East Coast hardcore style and with **MC Planet Asia,** a Bay Area artist who leans more toward the raw style of the L.A. scene.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—May 27: The Oakland hip-hop duo **Zion-I** slides smooth activist lyrics over beats that reflect its love of the old-school sound. The group's third album, "True & Livin'," released last month, features the lyrical experts Gift of Gab (of Blackalicious), Talib Kweli, and Aesop Rock.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—May 26-27: **Rilo Kiley** sprang to life more than a decade ago in the lo-fi underbrush and has since grown into a towering pop band. Credit goes not only to the clear-sky vocals of the front woman, Jenny Lewis, and the mellow guitar playing of Blake Sennett but to their combined sense of adventurousness. With **Portastatic,** the alter ego of Superchunk's Mac McCaughan.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 28: The vocalist **Karen Akers.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Memphis soul, Delta blues, Hawaiian steel-guitar music, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms all figure in the work of the legendary blues guitarist and gravelly vocalist **Taj Mahal.** He travelled to Zanzibar to record his latest album, "Mkutano," and it features musicians from that island's Culture Musical Club ensemble, but Mahal will be performing with his trio May 24-29. The late shows on May 24-25 feature **Guy Davis,** the son of the actors and writers Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, who is out to prove that the rural blues are a relevant art form. He's not afraid to go to great lengths to make his case—his latest album, "Legacy," incorporates acoustic guitar, banjo, mandolin, and even rap.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through May 27, **Barbara Cook.** Starting May 31, **Eartha Kitt** begins a four-and-a-half-week run.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 24-29: **Wycliffe Gordon's Big Four** features the blustery trombonist and two buddies from the Lincoln

Thurston Hopkins's "Old Lady and Rolls" (1957), on view downtown at Leica through June 18.

Center Jazz Orchestra, the bassist **Reginald Veal** and the drummer **Herlin Riley,** along with **Johnny O'Neal** on the piano.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—May 24-June 4: The husband-and-wife team **Michael McKean** (of "Spinal Tap" fame) and **Annette O'Toole** (a mainstay on the television show "Smallville") have been writing songs and playing them for friends for years. Now they've decided to go legit. Their Oscar-nominated song "A Kiss at the End of the Rainbow" (from "A Mighty Wind") is sure to surface.

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—**Dr. John,** the rough-voiced embodiment of New Orleans, is also a master piano stylist who has absorbed all the polyglot influences that make up the city's musical legacy. He's making rare solo appearances here through May 29.

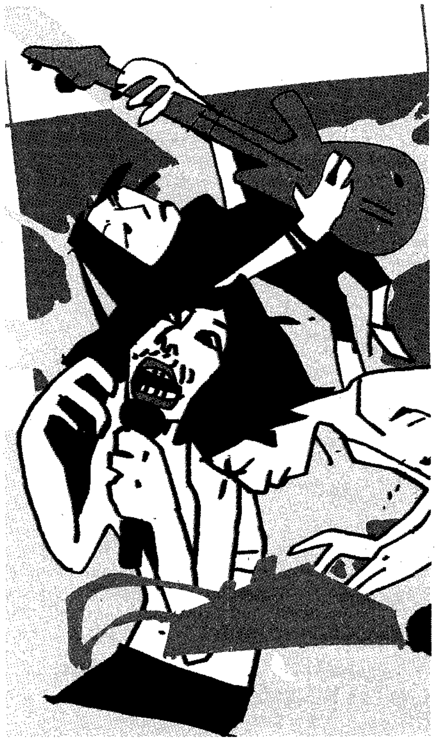
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 24-29: The vocalist **René Marie** got a late start (her professional career didn't begin in earnest until the age of forty), but she's making up for lost time. If her repertoire seems familiar, her spirited and often inventive delivery is anything but.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 24-29: **Clark Terry,** who is in his eighties, loves to remind audiences that "the golden years suck," but the intrepid brassman has yet to stop giving his all—which, as recent appearances have shown, is plenty. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Adorning the World: Art of the Marquesas Islands"** is a small show of objects dating from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century from the Polynesian island group that was Paul Gauguin's last home. The Marquesans embellished everything—their bodies with tattoos, pipes and musical instruments with carving, headdresses with feathers—and let little go to waste. One vitrine is filled with ornaments carved from the bones of enemies killed in battle. Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed'"** is centered on a mixed-media installation that pays tribute to Gustave Courbet. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Diane Arbus: Revelations,"** an indeed revealing (though gratingly worshipful) retrospective, confirms Arbus's achievement as a revolutionary photographer. Through May 30. ♦ **"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Through Aug. 21. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside additional work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. ♦ **"Thomas Demand."** The German artist's crisp photographs of cut-and-glued, life-size mockups of unpeopled environments suggest that, like photographs, our assumptions about reality are paper thin. Through May 30. ♦ Chris Marker, the esoteric French filmmaker, goes artified Ken Burns. The "Prelude" to a threatened magnum opus, **"Owls at Noon,"** is a nineteen-minute, two-track, eight-screen, black-and-white digital montage, set to an ill-tempered musical score, of words and pictures from and about the First World War. Grainy images of battlefield carnage and military hospitals alternate with shots of pretty girls and women, textured like etchings or stone reliefs. Snatches of T. S. Eliot's poem of hysterical self-loathing "The Hollow Men" and lots of abstruse commentary by Marker crawl by in bubble lettering. The world will end as it may. This arch, elegant, remarkably unaffecting work whimpers throughout. Through June 13. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)



The Boredoms, at the Bowery Ballroom.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim"** is an exhibition devoted to the museum's first curator and director, who was also an artist herself. Through Aug. 10. ♦ **"The Eye of the Storm: Works in Situ by Daniel Buren."** Through June 8. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Banks Violette: Untitled."** Opens May 27. ♦ **"Tim Hawkinson,"** a mid-career retrospective of the California artist's diverse inventions, including the football-field-size "Überorgan," an automated bagpipe housed in the sculpture garden at 590 Madison Avenue, at Fifty-seventh Street. Through May 29. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints made in the last fifty years, illustrates the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Through Aug. 28. ♦ **"Landscape,"** an idiosyncratic group of pieces from the permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Biomechanics has answered questions about how fast dinosaurs could move and about how they balanced their multiton bodies on two legs; videos and a six-foot animatronic *T. rex* skeleton demonstrate what's been learned. A diorama of the Liaoning Forest in China replicates Mesozoic conditions, and other stations explain new ideas about dinosaurs' relationships to modern birds, herding behavior, and possible reasons for their abrupt extinction. Through Jan. 8, 2006. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Basquiat"** is an important, intensely enjoyable retrospective of the neo-expressionist, who died in 1988, at the age of twenty-seven. Through June 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—**"Co-Conspirators: Artist and Collector"** examines the interplay between creator and buyer by looking at items from the collection of James Cottrell and Joseph Lovett, who had long-standing personal relationships with many of the artists whose work they bought. Through May 29. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Art Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—Fiona Tan's three hundred deadpan color video portraits of inmates and guards were taped in four prisons in Illinois and California. Viewers sit inside a circle of six screens, surrounded by barely moving three-quarter-length portraits; the only sound is the white noise of whirring fans and distant prison activity. The range of humanity presented is vast, reflecting the staggering number of people (more than two million) incarcerated in this country: there are cute blond guards, angelic-looking prisoners, grandmothers, tattooed toughs. **"Correction"** is aptly titled; it sternly forces us to confront our mostly firmly held stereotypes—not only about prisoners but about people on the outside, too. Through June 4. ♦ Jonah Peretti, leader of the Contagious Media Group at Eyebeam, provides the works-slash-stunts that serve as the core of **"Contagious Media,"** many of which may have touched down in your inbox in the last few years. "Nike Sweatshop Emails" (2001) details a correspondence with Nike after Peretti attempted (and failed) to order sneakers with the word "sweatshop" emblazoned on them. Other projects include Jim Young and James Hong's gauge of attractiveness, "Hot or Not" (2000), and the hypnotic, slightly grotesque "Dancing Baby" (1996), by Michael Girard, Robert Lurye, and Ron Lussier. Through June 4. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

BILL BURKE
Burke, who practices what might be called personal photojournalism, made a knockout first impression with a series of memorably funky portraits taken in the course of a road trip through the South in the late seventies. But in the years since then, he's worked almost exclusively in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and his understated but engaging pictures from those countries occupy most of this fine, if sketchy, thirty-year survey. Early proof of Burke's unerring eye: a group of black-and-white stereopticon shots from the early seventies, with 3-D views of a barroom, a bowl of Cheerios, and a welder with a blowtorch that are casually breathtaking. Through June 18. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

JACK GOLDSTEIN
An extended hand with fake butterflies attached to the fingertips flutters and twitches; the famous M-G-M lion is looped until his repeated roar begins to sound like a stalled car engine turning over; an animated bird flies around the interior of a china plate. These are some of the conceits of Goldstein's color-saturated 16-mm. films from the seventies, which lend humor and wit to postmodern appro-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MINUTE BY MINUTE

Tim Irwin's delicate, low-budget documentary "We Jam Econo" is a history of the Minutemen, a rock band from San Pedro, California, who recorded from 1980 until 1985, when the singer and guitarist D. Boon died in a van crash. Inspired by punk, the Minutemen became a great American rock band by creating music that was little like punk. Boon played small, cracked guitar parts and sang about politics. Mike Watt wrote bass lines that sounded like jazz melodies. The muscled, blond George Hurley looked out of place, but his powerful drumming was right. The film, at Walter Reade on May 24, is less about music than about the families that people are born into and those that they decide to make. Boon and Watt's mothers encouraged the band because it kept their sons off the street. While Boon and Watt are often described as "twins" and "brothers," they were also one of rock's great love stories. In a 1985 interview, Watt tells how he met Boon when the two were both thirteen and Boon fell out of a tree onto Watt. The movie cuts to 2003; a grayer, thinner Watt visits the tree and remembers thinking, God damn, this is the smartest dude in the world. Overcome, he walks away, saying, "I was quite smitten with him."

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

RACHEL DOMM

priation. Their brevity (the entire show, ten pieces in all, clocks in at half an hour) helps them resist tedium; instead, they register like quick bursts of poetry. Through June 11. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400.)

EDWARD HOPPER
No "Nighthawks" studies, unfortunately, but there are sketches for "South Carolina Morning" (in the Whitney collection) and Cape Cod specials like "High Noon" and "The Lee Shore." More intimate revelations occur in the margins: fingerprints, proposed measurements for the finished canvases, and even color notations designating areas of "gray green," "light warm," and "dark warm." These twenty-two drawings, found in Truro after Hopper's death, are less shocking than reassuring, confirming the clear-eyed, American directness of his vision. Through May 31. (Peter Findlay, 41 E. 57th St. 212-644-4433.)

JULIE MEHRETU
Mehretu's drawings aren't as compelling as her paintings—or a lot of other artists' drawings, for that matter—but the germs of her popular, accomplished abstractions are evident. Thick, frenetic patches of cross-hatching and softer feathered lines indicate a maelstrom of movement, a tempest setting the compositions in motion. Her work is often read as an abstract depiction of geopolitics, and allusions in the titles here sometimes support that idea. But a multitude of other explanations would suffice, and there's no reason not to just sit back and enjoy her draftsmanship. Through June 18. (Projectile, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-1585.)

JAVIER SILVA-MEINEL
Like that of many of his Latin-American peers, this Peruvian photographer's approach to realism is decidedly magical. Standing before the draped backdrop of Silva-Meinel's ad-hoc portrait studio, naked Amazon Basin Indians look alternately amused and bemused to be wearing crowns, capes, or scarves, all formed of fish, as if in preparation for some festive coming-of-age ritual or outlandish "Project Runway" challenge. Many of Silva-Meinel's male subjects pose hugging or hefting fish so big they dwarf the guys, suggesting a cross-species bond at once mythic, erotic, and slyly comic. Through June 4. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

DEAN BYINGTON
From a short distance, these paintings look like monochrome fields of gray, pink, or streaked lavender. Up close, though, they're as dense and detailed as toile, with tight, repeating patterns. Byington makes them by mixing cut-up photocopies of his own drawings with found images, silk-screening the collages onto linen canvases, and polishing the surfaces with glazes and more detailed stencilling. Beautiful and intricate, they demand hyper-close viewing, without which their delicious, creepy Thanatos flattens out into affectless decoration. Through June 18. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.)

SOPHIE CALLE
In 1985, Calle's boyfriend broke her heart with a three-minute 2 A.M. phone call from Paris to her room in a New Delhi hotel. The details of the breakup are furnished through a series of color photographs and black text panels, each paired with another story of suffering solicited by Calle from her friends. Sudden, terrible deaths are the most common tales; the solipsistic repetition of Calle's disappointment juxtaposed with this shifting, anonymous grief is surprisingly provocative. Through June 30. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

JACK GOLDSTEIN
Paintings from the early eighties, of flaring rockets, lightning flashing, and fighter-jet contrails, serve as counterpoints to Goldstein's better-known 16-mm. films (see Galleries—Uptown). The Photo-Realism and appropriated images aptly represent the "Pictures" group, with which he was linked, but these paintings pale in relation to his films—or the more sophisticated photographs of peers like Cindy Sherman. Through May 27. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

RICHARD PRINCE
A paladin of good-enough avant-gardism, Prince shows twenty-five years' worth of suave japes: reproduced photographs attesting to cult tastes (motorcycle babes, for example), sculptures representing incompletely customized car hoods, and zestily attractive abstract paintings laced with vile old cartoons and jokes of the travelling-salesman ilk. A member of the critical-theory generation, Prince vaguely insults art-love even as he engineers ways to excite it—in effect, having his cake and gagging on it, too. Through June 18. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

"SCULPTURE"
Post-pastoral objects, including works by Roxy Paine, Nam June Paik, and Ingrid Calame. A group of enormous cast-resin wrens by Hiraki Sawa emit strange song, while Vito Acconci contributes a weird chalet-shaped tree house, whose seats discipline the body with hunchbacked discomfort. Through June 4. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

JASPER JOHNS: Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through June 25. **JOAN MITCHELL:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through June 25. **MALCOLM MORLEY:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 25. **NEO RAUCH:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 18.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

TINA BARNEY
In the years since she stopped photographing her own high-Wasp social circle, Barney's work has lost much of the offhand intimacy that once defined it. But even when her subjects are new acquaintances—in this case, a number of privileged and "artistic" characters from Spain and Germany—she brings an insider's sense of knowing complicity to their portraits. No matter where she finds herself, Barney always seems at home in these handsomely appointed interiors, and her feel for rich, painterly color has never been more assured. Through June 4. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166.)

MANGELOS
Dimitrije Basicevic (1921-87) was a curator, art historian, and critic active in the early sixties in Zagreb's neo-Dadaist group Gorgona, where he made art under the pseudonym Mangelos. A sampler of his works is on display here, showcasing his severely restricted palette—red, white, black, and rare touches of gold—and his preoccupation with alphabetical systems. Passages in French, Greek, and Latin and Cyrillic and runic marks appear in cramped but expressive handwriting on blackboard-like panels. A recurring term is the Latin incantation "mutabor," which translates as "I shall be changed." Through July 30. (Peter Freeman, 560 Broadway. 212-966-5154.)

"OK/OKAY"
Conflicting etymologies of the word "O.K." are printed on the wall of this dual-venue show, with sources ranging from Choctaw to Finnish, ancient Greek to eighteen-thirties slang. The fourteen European artists inside present similarly intriguing takes on history and idiom. Outstanding is Gabriele Di Matteo's "History Stripped Bare," a grid of tiny, hilarious canvases that re-create scenes like the murder of Julius Caesar and the funeral of Pope John Paul II, but with all the figures nude. The rest of the work is as winsome and obliging as the show's title suggests. Through July 16. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 212-925-2035; and Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

Short List

ALBERTO CASADO: Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473. Through June 25. **THURSTON HOPKINS:** Leica, 670 Broadway. 212-777-3051. Through June 18.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The season begins with four performances of "Don Quixote," followed by eight programs set entirely to music by Tchaikovsky. To see the cast lists, visit www.abt.org. ♦ May 24 and May 26 at 8 and May 25 at 2 and 8: "Don Quixote." ♦ May 27 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Swan Lake Act II Pas de Deux," "Onegin Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ May 28 at 2 and May 31 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Nutcracker Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ May 28 and May 30 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Swan Lake Act II Pas de Deux," "Swan Lake Act III Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The season continues. ♦ May 24 at 7:30 (an all-Robbins program): "The Goldberg Variations" and "Glass Pieces." ♦ May 25 at 8: "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet," "The Four Temperaments," and "Glass Pieces." ♦ May 26-27 at 8: "Jewels." ♦ May 28 at 2: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,' " "Tālā Gaisma," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ May 28 at 8: "Ballo Della Regina," "Polyphonia," and "The Four Temperaments." ♦ May 29 at 3: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ May 31 at 7:30: "Octet," "After the Rain," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 26.)

"TENSE DAVE"
In a new piece by the Australian collaborative Chunky Move, four psychodramas unfold on a revolving stage that holds multiple adjoining rooms, like a doll house. Jodie Fried's ingenious set steals some thunder from the troubled characters—a foot fetishist, a suicidal girl in a white nightgown, a man bewildered by an Ikea instruction leaflet, and Dave, who stumbles from room to room. The characters' isolated lives intersect, sometimes humorously, sometimes with grisly consequences. Their constrained movement reflects the tension of the characters' inner worlds. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 25-28 at 7:30. Through June 11.)

MOMIX
In Moses Pendleton's new "Lunar Sea," dancers are cast as extraterrestrial humanoids. Pendleton creates illusions so vivid they fool the senses—when a strange beast divides into two moving bodies, it comes as a shock. With trick lighting, a New Age soundtrack, and dumbfounding stunts, the production bears a resemblance to an awesome halftime show, but the bursts of irony in Pendleton's conception and the pure lines of his dancers elevate the work beyond mere entertainment. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 24-27 at 8, May 28 at 2 and 8, and May 29 at 2 and 7:30.)

"TAP EXTRAVAGANZA 2005"
Each May, the month of Bill Robinson's birthday, New York's tap community honors its own with an overstuffed show. This year's awardees include the producer Cobi Narita, the Philadelphia master LaVaughn Robinson, and the underappreciated Harold Cromer, a veteran of the Stumpy and Stumpy vaudeville team. The flashy showmen Van (the Man) Porter and Robert L. Reed host a program that features Jimmy Slyde and the watch-out-here-they-come duo of Kendrick Jones II and Joseph Wiggan; the Frank Owens trio keeps everything swinging. (F.I.T., Haft Auditorium, 227 W. 27th St. 212-279-4200. May 29 at 7.)

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG
With his ambitious new ballet, "Anna Karenina," Boris Eifman adds to the list of historical and literary victims around whom he likes to create his lurid dance spectacles. Set to a score that's half Tchaikovsky, half electronica (composed, in part, by Eifman), the ballet focusses on the divided nature of Tolstoy's doomed adulteress—"like in a werewolf," Eifman has explained. At the end, the heroine is crushed by the corps de ballet in the form of a human locomotive. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. May 24-27 at 8, May 28 at 2 and 8, and May 29 at 3.)

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"DANCEAFRICA 2005"
Chuck Davis's annual celebration of dance and music from the African diaspora returns. From Jamaica, the loping dance ensemble known as L'Acadco presents "Bing: A Mystic Revelation of Rastafari" and "Body Riddims to Bob," a tribute to you-know-who. From the Ivory Coast (now based in Brooklyn), Mamadou Dahoué and the Ancestral Messengers Dance Company offer mask dances, including the "Coucouba" ritual, which is meant to bring people together. That's the ethos of the entire festival. During what other performance in an opera house are you asked by the host to hug your neighbor? (BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 27 at 7:30, May 28 at 2 and 7:30, and May 29 at 3.)

"SPRING STEPS"
The expressive choreographer Doug Varone and his fine-tuned company offer two repertory favorites in the last of three free concerts at the World Financial Center. "Castles," set to Prokofiev, is a detached, abstract piece. Its pas-de-deux and waltz sequences are tinged with romantic loneliness. In "Rise" (1993), Varone's dancers fling themselves across the stage at daunting, exhilarating speeds. (220 Vesey St. 212-945-0505. Open rehearsal on May 24 at 12:30; performance at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

WEST SIDE OPERA: "DON QUICHOTTE"
In honor of the four-hundredth anniversary of Cervantes's novel "Don Quixote," the little company offers scenes (with chamber-ensemble accompaniment) from Massenet's opera. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. May 26 at 1. A donation is suggested.)

AMATO OPERA
The Lower East Side's shoestring chamber-opera company, a crew of aspiring young professionals and robust amateurs, launches into its final production of the season, **"L'Elisir d'Amore,"** directed by Maestro Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. May 27-28 at 7:30 and May 29 at 2:30. Through June 12.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Hans Graf, the Austrian conductor of the Houston Symphony and an increasingly visible presence on the American orchestral scene, makes his Philharmonic début in an all-Russian program. Most of the music emphasizes the rustic element: Liadov's gemlike tone poems "The Enchanted Lake," "Kikimora," and "Baba-Yaga" and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2, "Little Russian," inspired by the folk music of Ukraine. Hélène Grimaud adds a touch of glamour to the event, offering her reserved and elegant style to the sophisticated urban melancholy of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. (May 26 at 7:30, May 27 at 11 A.M., and May 28 at 8.) ♦ Note: Graf also conducts a "rush hour" concert featuring the Liadov and Rachmaninoff works. (May 25 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.) ♦ For the orchestra's fourteenth annual free Memorial Day concert in the cavernous space of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Xian Zhang, the Philharmonic's assistant conductor, continues the Russian theme by leading two popular works: Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade." (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. May 30 at 8. No tickets required.)

ENSEMBLE INTERCONTEMPORAIN
Jonathan Nott, fresh from his New York début conducting the very traditional Bamberg Symphony, returns with his Parisian chamber orchestra, one of Europe's supreme new-music bands, to lead two contemporary masterworks: Ligeti's mysterious and exhilarating Piano Concerto (with Michael Wendenburg) and Rihm's frenetic chamber concerto, "Hunts and Forms." (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. May 25 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
Cho-Liang Lin brings his streamlined intensity to Barber's Violin Concerto while teaming up with two of his gifted students, Yoon Kwon and Yuri Namkung, in double concertos by Vivaldi and Bach (in D Minor), respectively. Li Jian conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 25 at 8.)

NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY
The violinist Anne Akiko Myers is the special guest for the esteemed orchestra's latest concert, performing Bruch's Concerto in G Minor on a program that includes music by Strauss ("Also Sprach Zarathustra") and the young composer Judd Greenstein, conducted by Paul Hass. (Carnegie Hall. 212-581-5933. May 29 at 2.)

MATT HAIMOVITZ:
"BUCK THE CONCERTO"
"Scherzo Grosso," a new concerto for cello and big band by David Sanford, will be the highlight of two sets with Sanford's Pittsburgh Collective and the maverick young cellist, who is determined to bring classical music out of the concert hall and into the nation's coffee shops and alternative music venues. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St. 212-219-3132. May 29 at 7 and 9:30.)

RECITALS

THE SYLVAN WINDS
It's the nature of woodwind-quintet concerts to veer off into back-of-the-drawer repertory, but this one—which includes D'Indy's "Sarabande et Menuet," a Saint-Saëns Caprice, and the more substantial Sextet by Strauss's good friend Ludwig Thuille—should be enlivened by the incisive playing of the young pianist Pedja Muzijevic. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 25 at 8.)

ETHOS PERCUSSION GROUP
The vibrant young ensemble performs new and recent works by Simon Shaheen, Pandit Samir Chatterjee, and others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 25 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
The pianist Roberto Prosseda performs an entire weekend of Mendelssohn, which, depending on your taste, is either a taste of heaven or a season in hell. May 26-27 at 7:30: Mendelssohn's own piano arrangement of the Scherzo, Nocturne, and Wedding March from the incidental music for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be a familiar feature amid a bevy of recently discovered works, including three Études and a Sonata in E Minor. ♦ May 28 at 7:30 and May 29 at 4: The violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist and scholar Charles Rosen join Prosseda for more new works and a four-hand version of the "Dream" music. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES:
BOBBY FEW AND TOM CHIU
Chiu, the first violinist of the avant-garde Flux Quartet, teams up with the veteran pianist and other artists for an evening of improvisations and new works. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 26 at 8.)

NEW YORK EARLY MUSIC SERIES
The cellist John Moran, the harpsichordist Dongsok Shin, and the theorbo player Daniel Swenberg, best known, perhaps, as the continuo combo for Rebel, one of Gotham's few world-class early-music groups, offer a selection of cello sonatas by Francesco Geminiani. (St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 308 W. 46th St. 212-662-5876. May 28 at 8.)

FIREWORKS
Rock and jazz are the key influences on this punchy newcomer to the city's contemporary-music scene, which performs music by its director, the bassist Brian Coughlin (including "Chimera," written for the guitarist Oren Fader), in its latest concert. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. May 29 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL":
ANDRÉ WATTS
The price-is-right concert series, held at the dowager queen of midtown concert halls, presents a performance by the reliable veteran pianist, who will offer Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata and a selection of works by Chopin. (123 W. 43rd St. May 29 at 5. Free tickets, which are limited to two per customer, will be available starting at noon on the day of the performance.)

EVALON INGOLF AND
MAGDALENA BACZEWSKA
The violinist and the pianist, both young artists of promise, offer several florid works from the early-twentieth-century repertory, including Prokofiev's Sonata in D Major, Szymanowski's "La Fontaine d'Arèthuse," and Ysaÿe's Third Sonata. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 31 at 8.)

CLASSICAL NOTES
BERNSTEIN FOR KIDS

Today, classical concerts for kids can be manically energized entertainments that resemble cartoons—a metaphor for an anxious orchestral industry that's desperately trying to build future audiences. But to watch Kultur's nine-DVD set of twenty-five of Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic, which were broadcast on CBS from 1958 to 1972, is to revisit a time when classical music in America was a healthy, surging thing, confident of its appeal and value.

Bernstein was as eager to use television as an equalizing medium as Stokowski was to shake hands with Mickey Mouse. From the first program, "What Does Music Mean?," he recognizes that kids' emotions and reactions can be just as complex as those of adults. For Bernstein, the definition of music was the experience of music, and he made his point by leading intense performances of works by Strauss, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, and Webern—and even the "Dragnet" theme. Later programs find Bernstein, in his blunt, phlegmy baritone, singing the Beatles' "Help" or the Kinks' "You Really Got Me" to help explain the nuts and bolts of modes and intervals used more subtly in works by Debussy and Bach.

Some of the juiciest moments are those in which Bernstein reveals himself in the music he describes. In identifying with Mahler as a composer-conductor—"two different men locked up in the same body"—he also hints at his own sexual and religious crises. "Berlioz Takes a Trip," a tribute to the "psychedelic" "Symphonie Fantastique," betrays his eagerness to keep up with the counterculture. The final show of the set, a program on Beethoven's "flawed masterpiece," "Fidelio," foreshadows the blocked, frustrated Lenny of the nineteen-seventies, fighting with his librettists and passionately concerned with "human rights" and the "freedom to speak out." The educational value of this series remans unmatched, but it's in the musical radiance of the performances—the programs featuring works by Mahler include such singers as Reri Grist, Christa Ludwig, and Walter Berry—that Bernstein does his best teaching of all.

—*Russell Platt*

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MOVIES OPENING

BOMB THE SYSTEM
A young graffiti artist (Mark Webber) and his crew contend with the N.Y.P.D. Vandal Squad, in a drama directed by Adam Bhala Lough. Opening May 27. (Cinema Village.)

A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN
Christopher Browne directed this documentary about the history of professional bowling and the P.B.A.'s recent efforts to revive the sport. Opening May 27. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE LONGEST YARD
In a comedy remake directed by Peter Segal, an incarcerated pro quarterback (Adam Sandler) and coach (Burt Reynolds) put together a football team and take on the guards at the jail. With Chris Rock. Opening May 27. (In wide release.)

MADAGASCAR
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 27. (In wide release.)

THE NINTH DAY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 27. (Metro Twin and Quad Cinema.)

SAVING FACE
In Alice Wu's directorial début, a Chinese-American woman from a tight-knit community in Flushing, Queens, falls in love with another woman. In English and Mandarin. Opening May 27. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

SECOND BEST
An unsuccessful publishing executive (Joe Pantoliano) and his old friend (Boyd Gaines), now a movie producer, vie for the same woman (Jennifer Tilly), in a comedy directed by Eric Weber. Opening May 27. (Angelika Film Center.)

SEQUINS
A drama in which a teen-ager discovers she's pregnant and escapes to a nearby town, where she finds a mentor. Directed by Eléonore Faucher. In Armenian and French. Opening May 27. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NOW PLAYING

À TOUT DE SUITE
In 1975, Lili (Isild Le Besco), a quiet upper-bourgeois Parisian girl bored with her twin roles as daughter and art student, abruptly takes up with a handsome, gentle-looking boy (Ouassini Embarek) of Moroccan descent. The boy turns out to be a bank robber. Wanted by the police, he takes her off to Spain, Morocco, and then Greece, where he abandons her and she drifts around on her own. Based on the actual experience of Elisabeth Fanger (who wrote a memoir called "When I Was 19"), Benoît Jacquot's film holds our interest with the arbitrariness of its heroine's behavior. In the movie's proud refusal to explain or open up the characters, one can discern decades of French dedication to the *acte gratuit* as well as to elements of the terse anti-psychological dramaturgy favored by the New Wave directors. Jacquot shoots his tale in rather muddy, low-contrast black-and-white, and his young star's expressions alternate between radiant longing and a blankness so complete that one wonders at times if the heroine isn't merely stupid. This surly celebration of freedom isn't really satisfying or fun, but, then, it's not intended to be. In French.—*David Denby* (Angelika Film Center and BAM Rose Cinemas.)

CRASH
A brazenly alive and heartbreaking film about the rage and foolishness of intolerance—the mutual abrasions of white, black, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian citizens in the great and strange city of Los Angeles. The movie starts off with separate vignettes in which the characters run afoul of each other, say things better left unsaid, and get into terrible trouble. Later, they cross paths again, sometimes in bizarre coincidences that feel exactly right; some of these scenes play out at the edge of insanity, where contentiousness spills over into tragedy or farce. The furiously candid screenplay was written by Paul Haggis and Robert Moresco, and the picture was directed by Haggis, who, in his first time out as director, demonstrates an amazing skill with actors. Don Cheadle, as a withdrawn, melancholy police detective, is the star, and the other players include Terrence Howard and Thandie Newton as an upper-class African-American couple, Brendan Fraser and Sandra Bullock as an L.A. district attorney and his bitchy wife, Chris (Ludacris) Bridges and Larenz Tate as carjackers, Matt Dillon and Ryan Phillippe as cops, and Shaun Toub as an Iranian shopkeeper who thinks everyone is out to cheat him. The gentle electronic score is by Mark Isham.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/2/05.) (In wide release.)

MEAN MACHINE
18

Burt Reynolds and Adam Sandler in "The Longest Yard," opening May 27.

FUNNY HA HA
This tender and repressed comedy, made on a shoestring budget by the young writer-director Andrew Bujalski, shows Marnie (Kate Dollenmayer), a bright but aimless woman on the verge of twenty-four, drifting passionlessly through pointless jobs in a college town with her unmoored fellow-graduates. It is an unlinked chain of missed connections—Mitchell (Bujalski) asks out Marnie, who is into Alex (Christian Rudder), who has a girlfriend. The cleverly diffuse dialogue, with a "like" or an "I mean" in every phrase, reveals a generation struggling to express anything at all besides uncertainty. Like Alfred Hitchcock's Marnie, a frigid kleptomaniac who turns out to have seen traumatic things as a child, Bujalski's chilled Marnie seems to have been mentally abused, and the script hints at the villain—television. By casting himself as her persistent admirer, Bujalski winkingly suggests the potential cure for her painful lack of passion: the redemptive power of art.—*Richard Brody* (Cinema Village.)

GLORIA
In John Cassavetes's 1980 drama, Gloria (Gena Rowlands), a former Mob moll, goes on the lam with a six-year-old boy (John Adames) and a book of Mob accounts. The entire film is an endgame, where running from death is as absurd as waiting for it. The ubiquitous Mafia is Being itself, or what Gloria calls "the system." Cassavetes's hard-nosed metaphysics are matched by his odd couple's intimate ferocity. "I am the man," the boy insists; the scenes of his vain defiance and of Gloria's resentment resemble nothing so much as the domestic combat of lovers and could as easily have featured Rowlands and her real-life husband, Cassavetes, with no change of dialogue. No director married to his leading lady has ever filmed her face to such self-deprecating effect: the folds of her forehead and the crags beneath her eyes betray her hard years with him. The demanding man and the defenseless boy converge; both are saved by this glorious wreck of a woman who would kill for them.—*R.B.* (Museum of Modern Art; May 30.)

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
A bold, not to say foolhardy, attempt to divert the work of Douglas Adams, with its flood of ruminative wit, into a mainstream movie. Martin Freeman stars as Arthur Dent, your basic tetchy Brit, who is dragged along by his un-British—indeed, unhuman—friend Ford Prefect (Mos Def) on a trip through some of the more risible highlights of deep space. If you are not familiar with the conceit of the "Hitchhiker" franchise, whose previous incarnations include a radio series, four novels, and a TV show, you should find much to relish in the revelation that other worlds can be just as wearisome and mismanaged as this one. Many gags, ranging from Marvin the suicidal robot (voiced by Alan Rickman) to the Babel fish that you insert into one ear if you wish to understand all languages, survive, yet the film feels frantic and scattershot, and its rush toward a happy ending is wholly alien, as it were, to the wry pessimism of the original. Most of the cast, understandably, have a stranded and bewildered air, with the exception of Bill Nighy; he plays Slartibartfast, a donnish designer of planetary coastlines who once won an award for Norway.—*Anthony Lane* (5/9/05) (In wide release.)

THE HOLY GIRL
Amalia (María Alche), a radiantly beautiful teen-ager growing up in a family-run hotel in a small Argentine city, is pulled between traditional religious teachings that insist on a saintlike career for women and sexual longings that are just as fierce as a teen-age boy's. When a doctor attending a conference rubs up against her in a crowd, she reaches out to him, but he doesn't want an affair; he just wants to touch. Lucrecia Martel's gently comic movie is not about perversion; it's about the varieties of intimacy—between mothers and daughters, teen-age girls, doctors and patients. Martel shoots her movie with rapt attention to faces and bodies in the foreground while the life of the hotel spins loosely in the background. It's a distinctive visual style, but it's not a dramatic style, and the movie, for all its talent, isn't pulled together enough. Yet Martel is someone to watch: she has a fantastic eye for detail and mood. With Mercedes Morán as the heroine's divorced mother and Carlos Belloso as the doctor. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
At the butt end of the twelfth century, a blacksmith (Orlando Bloom) follows his noble father (Liam Neeson) to Jerusalem, in search of salvation, wealth, and adventure, though not necessarily in that order. He is shipwrecked en route, emerging from the wreck with the bleary air of a groom awaking from a successful stag party. This is one of many underpowered moments in the film, which, despite being directed by Ridley Scott, contrives to make a great and often magnificent fuss about the doings of a feeble hero; in this respect it is the very opposite of Scott's "Gladiator," which worked hard to earn its bombast. Much is made of the power play between the King of Jerusalem (a leper in a metal mask), his exotic and plainly loopy sister (Eva Green), his military adviser (Jeremy Irons), and a brace of leering villains (Marton Csokas and Brendan Gleeson). Opposing them is the mighty Saladin (Ghassan Massoud) and, more injurious still, the filmmakers' anxiety about causing offense to the faithful of any creed. The outcome is a movie so desperate to provoke comparisons with the religious enmities of today that it somehow forgets the fire in its own belly. With Edward Norton.—*A.L.* (5/9/05) (In wide release.)

KINGS AND QUEEN
Nora (Emmanuelle Devos), a Parisian bourgeoise and gallery manager in her late thirties, goes to Grenoble to visit her father, a famous writer and teacher who is looking after Nora's son for the summer. At the same time, Nora's ex-boyfriend Ismaël (Mathieu Amalric), a manic-depressive with bright eyes and the eager manner of a cocky teen-

ANDY FRIEDMAN

ager, argues merrily with two orderlies who arrive at his apartment to cart him off to the loony bin. A violist in a string quartet, Ismaël is a brilliant clown who finds his own rants so amusing that once he gets started he can't stop himself. The two narratives never really come together, which is a bit of a surprise. Over the years, we have seen so many French films that have made a fetish of precision that it's startling to see something that is freewheeling, explosive, and rather slovenly. Directed and cowritten by Arnaud Desplechin, "Kings and Queen" is, by any normal standard, a mess, yet the movie is full of rhetorical excitement and brilliant moments. The music careers alarmingly from Henry Mancini to Anton Webern. In French, English, and German.—*D.D.* (*5/16/05*) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KUNG FU HUSTLE

The director Stephen Chow (he also wrote, produced, and stars) assembled this fantastic martial-arts film as cleverly as Tex Avery approached animation. Characters run down the road at superspeed, take flowerpots to the head without a whimper, and fly through the air deliriously. The plot, about a group of over-the-hill, tenement-living kung-fu masters with superpowers who fight a group of axe-wielding gangsters, is anarchic; the cast of Hong Kong actors is comic perfection, especially Yuen Qiu (who plays a hair-curlered, cigarette-smoking landlady). The computer-enhanced stunt work is astonishing, but it's Chow's ability to find the humor in his flights of fancy that's truly distinctive. In Cantonese and Mandarin.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

LAYER CAKE

A muddled but exciting crime thriller, starring the British actor Daniel Craig, that relies on that old plot perennial: the last big job before retirement. Directed stylishly by Matthew Vaughn, the movie has the flavor of a good pulp novel. The complex story, filled with twists and turns, concerns the unloading of a cache of stolen drugs and the search for the runaway daughter of a crime boss. Craig, following in the footsteps of actors like Paul Bettany (in "Gangster No. 1") and Clive Owen (in "Croupier"), delivers a smoldering performance that is effortless and subtle. With Michael Gambon in a showstopping role as a not-to-be-argued-with crime lord.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

MAD HOT BALLROOM

Marilyn Agrelo's documentary follows three competing groups of fifth graders as they learn the music and the steps of swing, the rumba, the tango, and other ballroom dances. A picture of New York kid culture (Dominican students from Washington Heights, upscale kids from Tribeca, Italians and Asians from Bensonhurst), the film focusses not only on the buoyant work of the contestants but also on their dedicated teachers. Agrelo's filmmaking provides telling glimpses of the students' home lives, and she avoids any cloying sentiment. What she captures is a moving, joyous childhood escapade.—*B.D.* (Cinemas 1, 2, and 3 and Sunshine Cinema.)

MONSTER-IN-LAW

In this comedy set in L.A., there are banks of flowers everywhere—great rolling tapestries of petals laid out in private homes, on the sets of TV talk shows, in restaurants. In case we missed the blooming-and-blossoming theme, the heroine, Charlie (Jennifer Lopez), a Venice Beach free spirit who works as a dog-walker, caterer, and temp, also paints floral whatnots on the walls of her apartment. Charlie, in an equivalent to Ben Stiller's role in "Meet the Parents," falls in love with a dreamboat (Michael Vartan) and has to do battle with his drunkenly possessive mother, played by the great Jane Fonda, who, in a misguided "comeback," gives a performance so strenuous that it's almost unwatchable. O.K., it's silly to get upset. "Monster-in-Law" is just a commercial product, as squarely aimed at teen-age girls as an advertisement for pink cell phones. Still, the self-confident fatuity and condescension of the entire show are offensive. The two lovers don't have an idea, an opinion, a trace of wit—all they want to do is cuddle and disappear into the petunias-and-roses California kitsch. Written by Anya Kochoff and directed by Robert Luketic.—*D.D.* (*5/16/05*) (In wide release.)

MYSTERIOUS SKIN

The director Gregg Araki's film, based on the sensational (in every sense of the word) novel by Scott Heim, retains the lo-fi road-movie atmosphere of his previous works ("The Living End," "The Doom Generation"), but there's a heartening maturity this time around. The story concerns an adolescent hustler (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), who's haunted by child abuse, and his former Little League teammate (Brady Corbet), who's attempting to find an answer to the amnesia he suffers when trying to recall a past incident. The actors capture the sad yearning of the characters, and Michelle Trachtenberg and Elisabeth Shue give strong supporting performances. Although this is Araki's best work, the film is finally too dreamy to dramatize the urgent storytelling of the novel. It drifts with an on-the-road aimlessness, losing its initial sexy, dark power.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT

Ingmar Bergman achieves one of the few classics of carnal comedy: a tragicomic chase and roundelay that raises boudoir farce to elegance and lyric poetry. This 1955 film is the culmination of Bergman's "rose" style; as writer and director, he ties up his persistent, early battle-of-the-sexes themes in an intricate plot structure. And in this fin-de-siècle houseparty setting, with its soft light, its delicate, perfumed atmosphere, and its golden pavilion, the women are all beautiful and the epigrams shine. The film becomes an elegy to transient love; a gust of wind, and the whole vision may drift away. As the hostess, the stage actress trying to win back the lawyer she loves, there is the great Eva Dahlbeck (in one inspired, suspended moment she sings "Freut Euch des Lebens"). Ulla Jacobsson is the lawyer's virgin wife; Harriet Andersson, a blonde here but as opulent and sensuous as in her earlier roles, is the impudent, love-loving maid; Margit Carlquist is the proud, unhappy countess. Gunnar Björnstrand is the lawyer, Björn Bjelvenstam is his son, Jarl Kulle is the strutting count, and Naima Wifstrand is the actress's aged mother, who is carried about for her game of croquet. In Swedish.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of the Moving Image; May 28-29.)

STAR WARS—EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

That's all, folks. After five front-line reports from a galaxy far, far away, George Lucas has come to the end of his tale—or, rather, gone back to where he began. For devotees, it will signal a fond and snuffling farewell, as they bid adieu to a vast parade of clones, Ewoks, Darths, tragic hair styles, noble knights, and strangely fastidious androids. For the rest of us, there will be nothing but inexpressible relief. It is true that this sixth film marks an improvement upon the last two efforts, whose combined soullessness was enough to induce paralysis, but Lucas remains wedded to a hollow, antiseptic vision of other worlds, coupled with a determination to draw the glummest possible performance from otherwise talented actors. Hayden Christensen plays Anakin Skywalker, who is increasingly lured toward what he calls the dark side and what the rest of us would call frowning. Aiding him is the corrupt Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid), the Chancellor of the Republic, while those trying to thwart our hero's crossover include his pregnant wife (Natalie Portman) and, of course, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), who is himself thwarted by an unspeakable British accent. There are frantic duels, murderous dialogue, and a final, fetishistic transformation of trashed Jedi into evil lord, but the suspicion remains that Lucas has left deep space a far shallower place than he found it.—*A.L.* (*5/23/05*) (In wide release.)

TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE

You can track the last half century of American film by looking at the cinematography credits of Haskell Wexler, from "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" to last year's "Silver City"; he has also directed several films, most notably the 1969 mix of fact and fiction "Medium Cool." According to Wexler, there's no film he's worked on that he couldn't have directed better than the guy in the chair—including this one.

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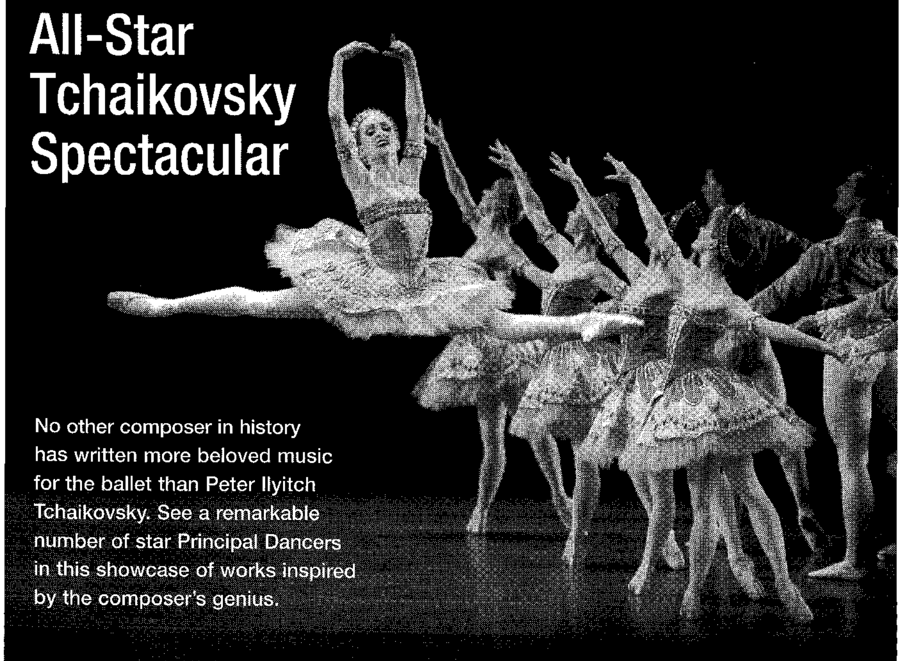

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Gillian Murphy in *Ballet Imperial*. Photo by Hidemi Seto.

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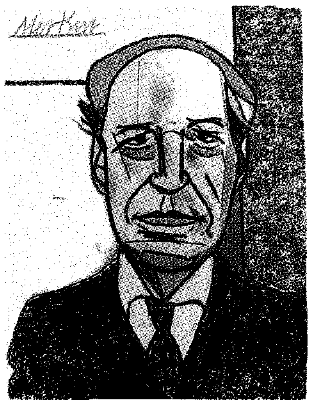
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BOULEZ AT EIGHTY



Pierre Boulez, now eighty, still patrols the corridors of music like a hip but ruthless headmaster. He recently remarked that Stravinsky "began so well" but produced "no content" after "Les Noces," and he chided pop artists for failing to use "better tools." There has been reaction; Thomas Adès, in the *Guardian*, compared Boulez's artistic politicking to that of Madame de Pompadour. But let's stop to celebrate what's good in the man: the raw power of early works like "Le Visage Nuptial," the ominous delicacy of "Le Marteau sans Maître," and, of course, the laser-guided brilliance of his conducting. In January, with the London Symphony, Boulez put together the most potent "Rite of Spring" imaginable. Earlier this month he led a bracing seminar on Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra with the Chicago Symphony. And the Ensemble Sospeso recently commissioned eight works in honor of the birthday boy. One of the better efforts, ironically, was by a pop artist: Thurston Moore, of Sonic Youth, with his half-raucous, half-sweet piano piece.

—*Alex Ross*

What makes this egomania particularly prickly is that "Tell Them Who You Are" is directed by his son, Mark Wexler, though co-directed may be more accurate: Haskell continually suggests camera angles, says when to cut, shapes the content, and is abusively sarcastic. Mark may have thought that this would be a good way for him and his father to resolve some long-standing personal issues, but he surely got more than he bargained for. Smartly intercut with examples of Haskell's work and interviews with such colleagues as Jane Fonda, Sidney Poitier, and John Sayles.—*Ken Marks* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNLEASHED

Jet Li gets to exercise his acting chops along with his impeccable martial-arts skills in this unapologetically silly action film. Li plays a mad dog of a man who's been raised from childhood to become a killer for a Glasgow gangster (played with great relish by Bob Hoskins). After Li escapes his tormentors, he's befriended by a blind musician (Morgan Freeman) who shows him a bit of kindness and a good meal. When Hoskins's gang sets out to reclaim Li, the mayhem begins. The fight scenes are choreographed by the brilliant Yuen Woo Ping ("Kill Bill," "Kung Fu Hustle"), and the director, Louis Leterrier, wisely stays out of the way of the flying furniture.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BROTHERS: Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **DOMINION: A PREQUEL TO THE EXORCIST:** In wide release. **LADIES IN LAVENDER:** BAM Rose Cinemas and Paris. **KICKING & SCREAMING:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Premières. May 25-26 at 7: "6ixtynin9" (1999, Pen-Ek Ratanaruang; in Thai). ♦ May 25-26 at 9:30: "Last Life in the Universe" (2003, Ratanaruang; in Thai, Japanese, and English). ♦ New filmmakers. May 25 at 8: "The Art of Trash" (2003, Todd Pliss). ♦ "Eye & Ear Controlled Presents: Tony Conrad." May 26 at 8: "Dr. Chicago" (1968, George Manupelli). ♦ May 27 at 8: "Ride Dr. Chicago Ride" (1970, Manupelli). ♦ May 28 at 5: Videos by Robert Ashley (1976-84). ♦ May 28 at 8: "Cry Dr. Chicago" (1971, Manupelli). ♦ May 29 at 3: " 'Rameau's Nephew' by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen" (1974, Michael Snow). ♦ May 29 at 8:30: "Short Story" (2005, Snow) and "New York Ear and Eye Control" (1964, Snow). ♦ Special screening. May 27 at 7 and 9:15 and May 28 at 4:30, 7, and 9:15: "It Happened Here" (1966, Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo; in English and German). ♦ "Essential Cinema." May 28 at 3: "Bells of Atlantis" (1952, Ian Hugo), short films by Larry Jordan (1962-68), "In the Street" (1952, Helen Levitt), and "Geography of the Body" (1943, Willard Maas). ♦ May 29 at 4 and 7: "Darling Lili" (1970, Blake Edwards).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)— Cinemachat with Elliott Stein. May 25 at 7: "The Killing Kind" (1973, Curtis Harrington). ♦ The best of the African Film Festival. May 26 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Kounandi" (2003, Appoline Traoré; in Dioula), "About Braids" (2003, Jacqueline Kalimunda; in French), and "For the Night" (2004, Isabelle Boni-Claverie; in French). ♦ May 27 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Dirt for Dinner" (2000, Branwen Okpako; in German). ♦ May 28 at 2 and 4:30: "Cosmic Africa" (2002, Craig and Damon Foster). ♦ May 28 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Madame Brouette" (2002, Moussa Sene Absane; in Wolof and French). ♦ May 29 at 2 and 6:50: "Agogo Eewo" (2002, Tunde Kelani; in Yoruba). ♦ May 29 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Soldiers of the Rock" (2003, Norman Maake). ♦ May 30 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15 and May 31 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Moolaadé" (2004, Ousmane Sembene; in Bambara and French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In repertory. May 25-26 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Nights of Cabiria" (1957, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ May 27-31 at 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "The Two of Us" (1967, Claude Berri; in French).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." May 31 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Stormy Waters" (1941, Jean Grémillon; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"112 Years of Cinema." May 25 at 5:30: "The Boy with Green Hair" (1948, Joseph Losey). ♦ May 25 at 7: "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" (1943, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ♦ May 25 at 7:30: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese). ♦ May 26 at 5:30: "Rebecca" (1940, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ May 26 at 8 and May 29 at 2: "The Divine Lady" (1929, Frank Lloyd; silent). ♦ May 27 at 8:30: "All the King's Men" (1949, Robert Rossen). ♦ May 30 at 3:30: "Mildred Pierce" (1945, Michael Curtiz). ♦ May 30 at 3:45: "Gloria" (†). ♦ Through June 20: "To Save and Project: The Third MOMA International Festival of Film Preservation." May 26 at 6: "Visages d'Enfants" (1925, Jacques Feyder; silent). ♦ May 26 at 8:30 and May 28 at 2: "Hud" (1963, Martin Ritt). ♦ May 27 at 6 and May 30 at 8: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; silent). ♦ May 27 at 5:30 and May 28 at 4:30: "Selva" (1981-83, Maria Klonaris). ♦ May 27 at 8:15: "Scorsese Presents 'Before the Revolution' " (2004, Martin Scorsese) and "Before the Revolution" (1964, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ May 28 at 2: "Underground" (1928, Anthony Asquith; silent). ♦ May 28 at 4: "A Cottage on Dartmoor" (1929, Asquith; silent). ♦ May 28 at 6:30: "Dry Wood" (1973, Les Blank), "Always for Pleasure" (1978, Blank), and "Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe" (1979, Blank). ♦ May 28 at 6:30: "Night Nurse" (1931, William A. Wellman). ♦ May 28 at 8:30: "The Trespasser" (1929, Edmund Goulding). ♦ May 28 at 8:45 and May 30 at 8:30: "Innocence Unprotected: A New Edition of a Good Old Movie" (1968, Dusan Makavejev; in Serbo-Croatian). ♦ May 29 at 2: "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" (1948, H. C. Potter). ♦ May 29 at 5: "True Confession" (1937, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ May 29 at 5 and May 30 at 5:45: "Sant Tukaram" (1936, Vishnupant Govind Damle and Sheikh Fattelal; in Hindi and Marathi). ♦ May 30 at 6:15: "The New Babylon" (1929, Leonid Trauberg and Grigori Kosintsev; silent).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Fist and Sword: Martial Arts Film Classics." May 27 at 7:30: "Throw Down" (2004, Johnny To; in Cantonese). ♦ A François Ozon retrospective. All films are in French. May 28 at 2: "A Summer Dress" (1996) and "See the Sea" (1997). ♦ May 28 at 4: "Under the Sand" (2000; in French and English). ♦ May 29 at 2: "Water Drops on Burning Rocks" (2000; in French and German). ♦ Selected by François Ozon. May 29 at 4: "Imitation of Life" (1959, Douglas Sirk). ♦ Repertory nights. May 28-29 at 6:30: "Smiles of a Summer Night" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. May 27-29: "Manhattan" (1979, Woody Allen).

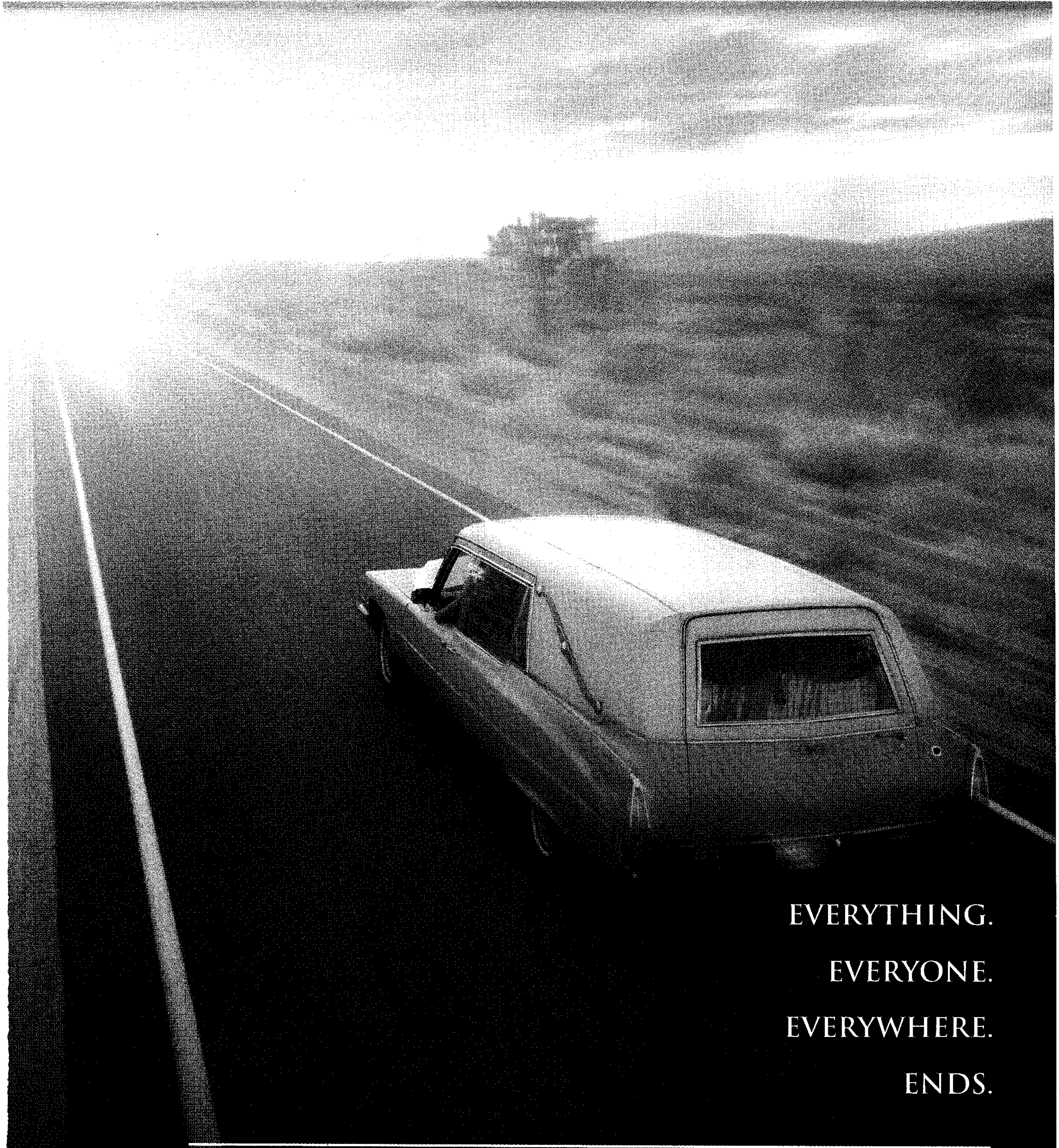
THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—May 27 at 4, 7, and 10 and May 28-30 at 10:30 A.M., 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, and 10:30: "Zhmurki" (2005, Aleksei Balabanov; in Russian). ♦ May 29 at 2: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ May 29 at 4:30: "The Chorus" (2004, Christophe Barratier; in French). ♦ May 31 at 6: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ May 31 at 8:15: "Downfall" (2004, Oliver Hirschbiegel; in German).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Michael Powell: Beauty Unending." May 25 at 2:15, May 27 at 6:15, and May 28 at 8: "Age of Consent" (1969, Michael Powell). ♦ May 25 at 4:30 and May 28 at 2:30: "The Boy Who Turned Yellow" (1972, Powell). ♦ May 26 at 8, May 27 at 4:45, and May 28 at 4: "Bluebeard's Castle" (1964, Powell; in German). ♦ May 27 at 2:30 and 8:30 and May 28 at 5:30: "They're a Weird

RICHARD MERKIN



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Mob" (1966, Powell). ◆ May 29 at 2 and 6:30: "The Red Shoes" (1948, Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ◆ May 29 at 4:30 and 9: "Peeping Tom" (1960, Powell). ◆ May 30 at 2 and 6: "I Know Where I'm Going" (1945, Powell and Pressburger). ◆ May 30 at 4 and 8: "Black Narcissus" (1947, Powell and Pressburger).

READINGS AND TALKS

"SELECTED SHORTS"
The series that pairs literature and actors winds down for the season with a reading of stories concerning things lost and things found, by Jonathan Lethem, Stuart Dybek, and Bernard Cooper. The readers this evening are Stephen Lang, Robert Sean Leonard, and Isaiah Sheffer, the series's founder. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 25 at 6:30.)

MARY ELLEN MARK
The photographer discusses "Exposure," her newly published, career-spanning collection. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary. May 25 at 7.)

ISABEL ALLENDE
The prolific author wrote her latest novel, "Zorro," in three months. Here she'll be talking with the writer Elissa Schappell about that book and about a slightly longer project, her trilogy for young readers, the final installment of which, "Forest of the Pygmies," was recently published. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444. May 25 at 7.)

THE HAPPY ENDING MUSIC AND READING SERIES
This weekly event, held in a Chinatown massage parlor turned watering hole, stipulates that its participants take a "public risk" (past gatherings have included a teacher who read unflattering student evaluations and a writer who performed a handstand) in addition to reading from their work. Meeting the challenge on May 25 at 8 are the fiction writers Aimee Bender, Danzy Senna, and Christine Schutt. The hard-rocking singer-songwriter Amy Miles is the musical guest; her requirement is to play at least one cover song. (302 Broome St., between Forsyth and Eldridge Sts. No tickets necessary.)

"AUTHOR2AUTHOR"
The writer Colum McCann interviews Thomas Kelly, a former teamster whose novels include "Payback" and the newly published "Empire Rising." (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary. May 26 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"ATLANTIC YARDS SMACKDOWN"
The ancient game rock, paper, scissors made headlines last month when it was pressed into service by a Japanese executive who couldn't choose between Christie's and Sotheby's for the auction of his company's multimillion-dollar art collection (Christie's won). On May 26, starting at 8, the New York Rock Paper Scissors Association presents a pro-am invitational competition for slightly smaller stakes: a four-hundred-dollar prize and the opportunity to go to the world championships in Toronto later this year. Sixty-four competitors are expected, from novice locals to more experienced players, including the members of team All Too Flat, the creators of a Merry Pranksters-like Web site who are known for such stunts as turning the cube in Astor Place into a mock Rubik's Cube. (Freddy's Bar and Backroom, 485 Dean St., Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.nyrps.org.)

LOWER EAST SIDE FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS
Hundreds of downtown performers—from puppeteers and poets to actors and acrobats—converge on the Theatre for the New City for three days of music, art, dance, and more. (155 First Ave., at 10th St. No tickets necessary. May 27-29. For a complete schedule, visit www.theaterforthenewcity.net.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Latin-American sales at the major houses feature the usual heavyweights—Botero, Rivera, and Matta—in auctions that are remarkably similar. (Anyone desperate for a "Constructivo" oil by Joaquín Torres-García can bid at either venue.) The brightest gem is at the **Sotheby's** sales (on May 24-25): Diego Rivera's "La Ofrenda" (1931), an intimate portrayal of Mexican Day of the Dead festivities. In contrast, a sketch by José Clemente Orozco from 1913 depicts, with raw energy, a brawl spilling into a bedroom. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ◆ Rufino Tamayo's "Silla Amarilla," from 1929, is the highlight of the **Christie's** Latin-American sale on May 25-26; the vibrant painting—a still-life of fruit placed atop a rustic chair—combines the styles of Cézanne and Picasso. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ◆ A suite of eight photographs of Trappist monks by André Kertész (expected to bring up to thirty thousand dollars) and Patrick Demarchelier's 1993 studio shot of Princess Diana—not to mention the usual array of studio nudes—demonstrate the range of a sale of photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at **Swann** on May 26. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

YUKO SHIMIZU

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
HUMAN-RIGHTS FILMS
June 10-23

The twenty-six films that make up the sixteenth annual Human Rights Watch International Film Festival range from features such as Pete Travis's "Omagh," which looks at life in a town in Northern Ireland following an I.R.A. bombing, to documentaries such as Katarina Rejger and Eric van den Broek's "Videoletters," a series of interviews with people whose lives were disrupted by war in the former Yugoslavia. (212-875-5600.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
June 25

Under Michael Barrett's leadership, the Westchester festival is livelier and more diverse than ever. This year's season begins, however, with a nod to tradition—Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with Peter Oundjian conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

ART
AT THE GUGGENHEIM
July 1

Two shows linked by formalist concerns open simultaneously: "Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints," which sets Mapplethorpe alongside sixteenth-century Flemish Mannerists, and "Oteiza: Myth and Modernism," abstract drawing, sculpture, and collage by the Basque artist, who died in 2003. (212-423-3500.)

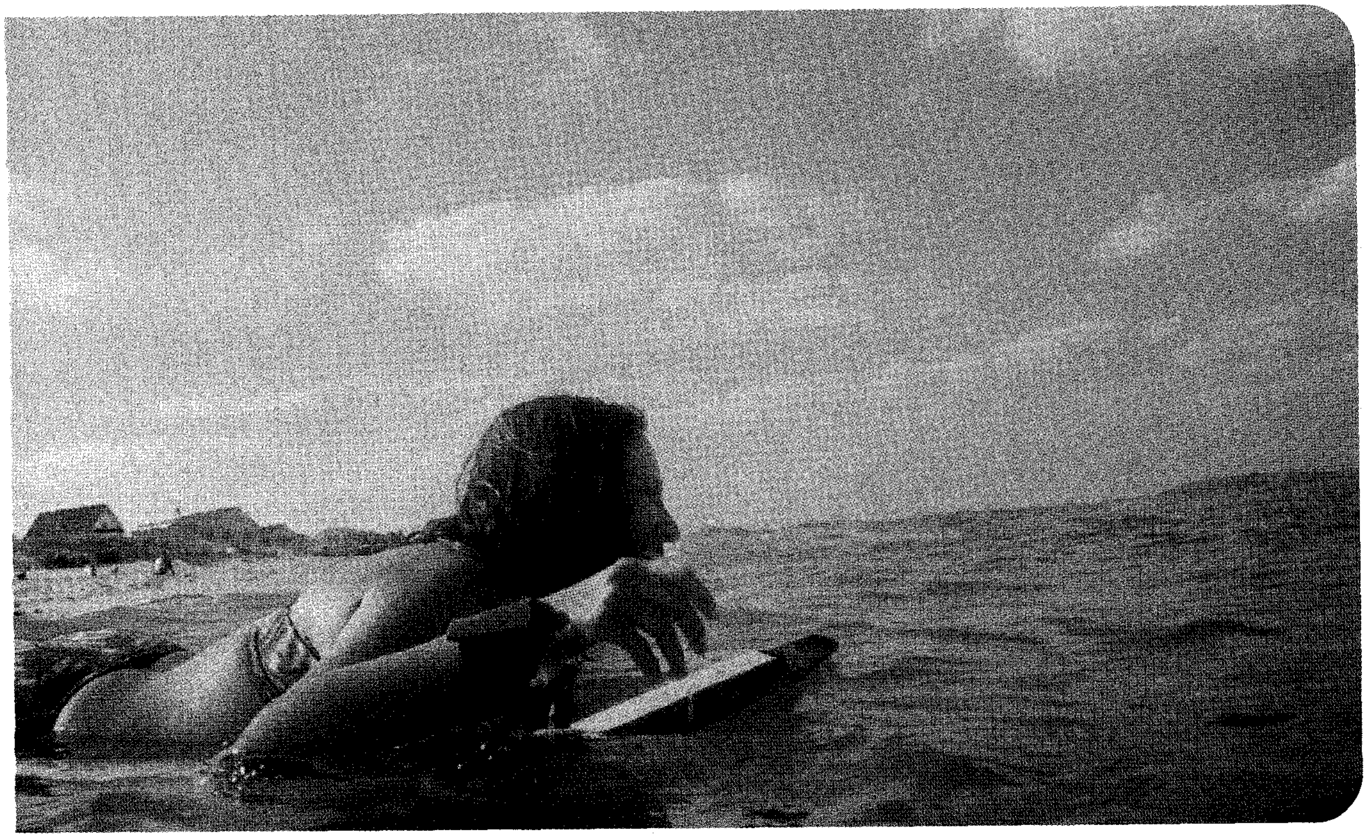
DANCE
RONALD K. BROWN
July 6-10

The venerable Brooklyn-based company returns to Jacob's Pillow, performing Alvin Ailey's "Grace" and premièring "Blueprint of a Lady," a dance set to Billie Holiday songs and sung by the jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE
SON VOLT/DR. DOG
July 14

The split-up of Uncle Tupelo in the nineties yielded both Jeff Tweedy's Wilco and Jay Farrar's Son Volt. Farrar went solo, but he has re-formed Son Volt for a new album, "Okemah and the Melody of Riot." They'll play the South Street Seaport; opening is Dr. Dog, a rocking favorite of It girls everywhere. (212-835-2789.)

Don't forget to thank that pair of stilettos
for not wearing shoes all week.



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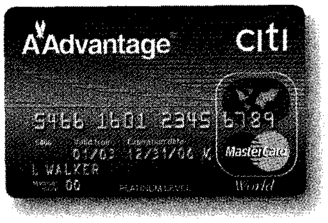

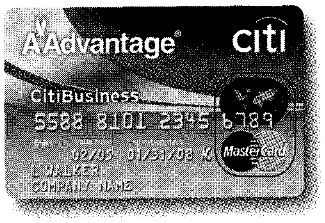

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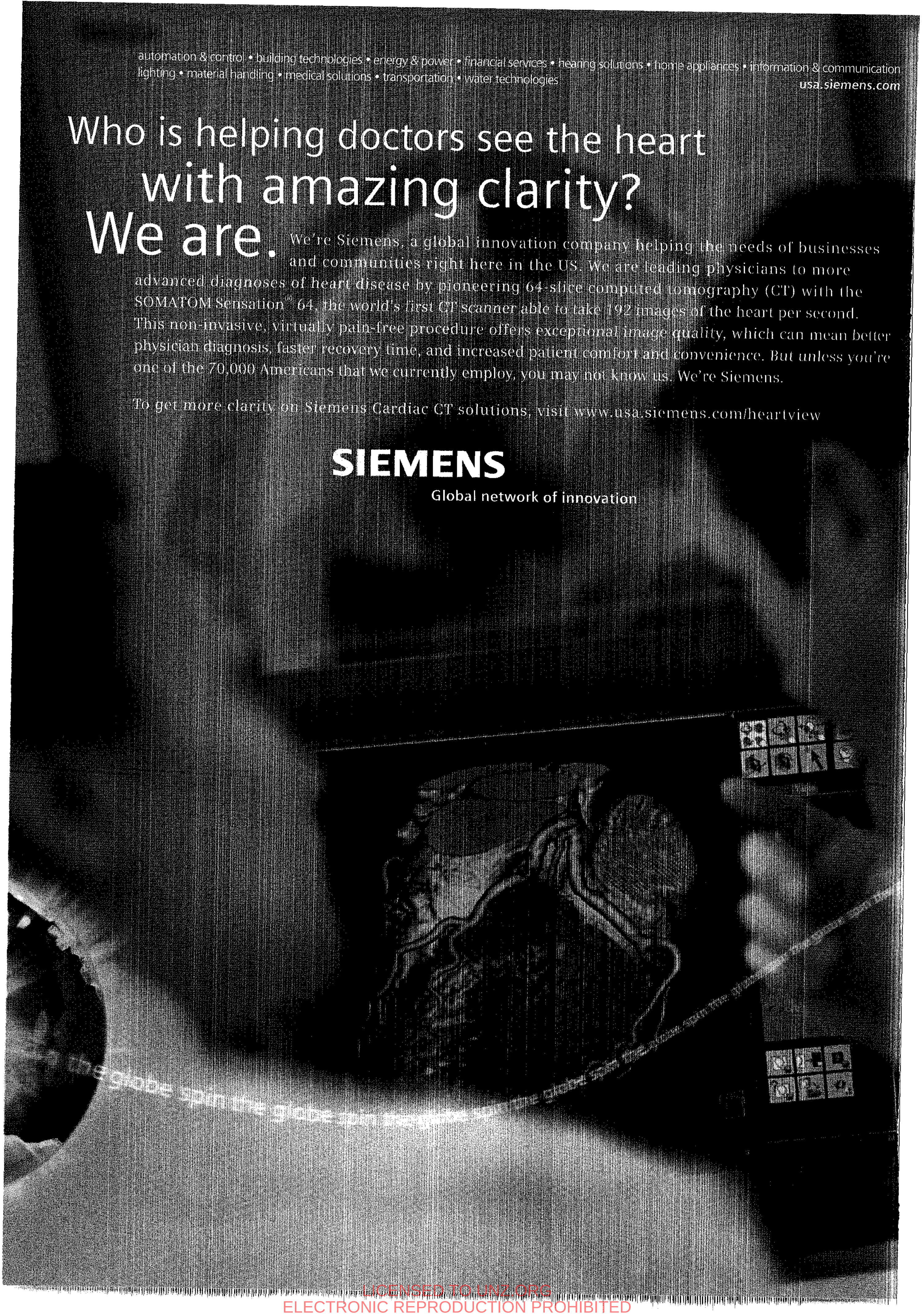

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THE
NEW YORKER

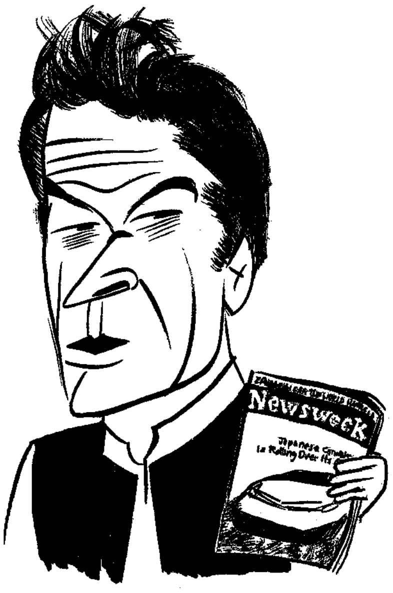
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
BIG NEWS WEEK

The one person most directly responsible for touching off the current frenzy over alleged Koran abuse by American interrogators at the Guantánamo Bay detention camp, more than anybody at *Newsweek*, was a Pakistani politician named Imran Khan. Khan is an Islamic populist, not exactly a rarity in that part of the world, but with a difference. Several differences, in fact. He is, first of all, a wealthy sports celebrity—a global cricket star for two decades—and a national hero not only for that but also because he built his country's first cancer hospital. He is a graduate of Oxford, and so thoroughly Westernized that his private life is fodder for the tabloids. After he laid down his cricket bat, he became increasingly devout, and in 1996 he founded his own political party. He is its only member of parliament, but his voice is listened to in Pakistan and beyond. Initially a supporter of General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's President, he now attacks him as an "American puppet." Khan says he wants Pakistanis to be America's "friends, but not lackeys." He has no sympathy with terrorism or dictatorship. He has even suggested that only democratically elected governments should be allowed to vote at the United Nations. In other words, he is pretty nearly the beau ideal of the sort of Muslim leader we want, and need, on "our" side.

Newsweek went to press with its story—three hundred words in the "Periscope" section, written by Michael Isikoff and John Barry—on April 30th. The item's most sensational assertion, attributed to "sources," was that "interrogators, in an attempt to rattle suspects, flushed a Koran down a toilet." The story added that that this "finding," among others, was "expected in an upcoming report by the U.S. Southern Command in Miami."

For five days, nothing. Then, on May 6th, Khan, in a press conference in Islamabad, waved a copy of the offending issue and thundered, "This is what the U.S. is doing—desecrating the Koran." And, rhetorically addressing Musharraf: "This war on terrorism is self-defeating if, on the one hand, you are demanding that we help them"—that is, us—"and, on the other hand, they are desecrating the book on which our entire faith is based." Khan's remarks were broadcast repeatedly throughout the Muslim world. The riots began on May 10th; in Afghanistan, seventeen people died and more than a hundred were injured.



Imran Khan

Two weeks after the item's publication, the Pentagon registered its first objection. On May 15th, *Newsweek* published a four-hundred-word note by Mark Whitaker, the editor, saying that the magazine's "original source" now "couldn't be certain about reading of the alleged Koran incident in the report we cited, and said it might have been in other investigative documents or drafts." Whitaker added, "We regret that we got any part of our story wrong." On May 16th, after a day of bitter attacks from Scott McClellan, the White House press secretary, and others, many of them accusing *Newsweek* of having blood on its hands, Whitaker issued this one-sentence statement: "Based on what we know now, we are retracting our original story that an internal military investigation had uncovered Koran abuse at Guantánamo Bay."

In many quarters, including some with no particular ideological or political axe to grind, *Newsweek's* stumble is being treated as a journalistic felony on a par with Jayson Blair's deliberate and re-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

peated fabrications at the *Times* or CBS News's gullible trumpeting of the forged Bush-National Guard documents. Not even close. In a careful chronology that *Newsweek*, to its credit, published in the same issue as Whitaker's editor's note, Evan Thomas described Michael Isikoff's principal informant as "a longtime reliable source, a senior U.S. government official who was knowledgeable about the matter." Before the "Periscope" item was published, Thomas wrote, John Barry showed a draft to "a senior Defense official," who steered him away from one detail—that a certain general might be a target of the investigation—but "was silent about the rest of the item." *Newsweek* evidently interpreted that silence as confirmation of a sort, thereby justifying its use of the plural "sources."

Newsweek has been widely pilloried, particularly in the conservative press and blogosphere, for, among other things, lying, fabricating, sympathy with terrorism, and hostility to (in the words of a *Wall Street Journal* editorial) "American purposes." The vilification, which is nonsense, takes it for granted that, as Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, put it last week, "*Newsweek's* story about Koran desecration is demonstrably false." It is not. The magazine's apology and retraction were carefully phrased—more so, it must be said, than the original item. What *Newsweek* apologized for was the statement that a claim of Koran abuse would be asserted in a forthcoming report from a particular military organization, the U.S. Southern Command. What it retracted was the statement that such abuse had been uncovered by "an internal military investigation." Left standing was the source's testimony that he had seen the abuse documented; he was simply no longer sure whether it was in the SouthCom draft or "other investigative documents or drafts." *Newsweek's* apology was an act of journalistic conscience. Its retraction a day later, which some have criticized as knuckling under to White House pressure, was at least equally an act of good citizenship—an effort to help stem outbreaks of violence, for which the perpetrators, not the magazine, are to blame.

Is it really necessary at this late date to point out that the problem is torture and abuse, not dubiously sourced reports of torture and abuse? If the allegations in the *Newsweek* story seemed credible on their face, not only to its editors but also to government officials (such as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who quickly assigned a general to look into them), perhaps that is because of the long, dismal history of horrors that have already been documented—in many cases, by investigations conducted within the Armed Forces themselves, which are full of men and women who recognize that the honor of their service is at stake.

The worst of these horrors are typified by some that came to light just last Friday, in an extraordinary report by Tim Golden, in the *Times*, about the routine use of torture at the Bagram Collection Point in Afghanistan, in 2002. The most heartrending passages of Golden's story, which was drawn from a two-thousand-page confidential Army file provided by an anonymous source, describe the death by torture of a slight, shy, illiterate young Afghan villager who was shackled by the wrists to the wire ceiling of his cell for days, struck more than a hundred times in one day for the amusement of captors who found his agonized screams of "Allah!" funny, and beaten on the legs until the tissue, in a coroner's words, "had basically been pulpified." By the time he died, most of his interrogators had concluded that he was guiltless. In common with the Abu Ghraib case and others, only a few lower-ranking officers and (especially) enlisted soldiers have been disciplined in connection with this and other abuses at Bagram.

The indulgence of this sort of depravity goes to, and comes from, the top. President Bush pushed aside the Geneva Conventions. A memo prepared on the order of his White House counsel, now Attorney General, suggested limiting the definition of torture to acts that bring on "organ failure." And his Secretary of Defense personally authorized "interrogation techniques," such as the use of dogs and forced nudity, that were expressly designed to outrage the religious customs of detainees. It was a short step from that to fake menstrual blood, sexual humiliation, and abuse of the Koran—other instances of which had been reported long before the current one. Nobody in a position of real authority has ever been held accountable for any of it. Against this background, words like "hypocritical" and "cynical" are inadequate to describe the White House campaign to demonize *Newsweek*. "Nauseating" is more like it.

We have to be respectful of Muslim sensibilities and Muslim beliefs, and the surest way to do that is to be respectful of our own. Otherwise, we'll do worse than simply forfeit any hope of support from alienated potential allies in the Muslim world, like Imran Khan. We'll lose sight of what we're fighting for, and, little by little, become the mirror of what we're fighting against.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THE BENCH
GIRLS BEHAVING BADLY

In 1985, a small group of feminist artists noticed that an exhibition of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art featured a hundred and forty-eight men artists and only seventeen women. The women decided to mount a protest over this disparity, but they wanted to do something a little more creative than holding a press conference or handing out leaflets. Because they were working artists themselves, they also hoped to avoid becoming targets for retaliation in the male-dominated art world. They decided on a guerrilla-style protest: this involved wearing gorilla masks in public, calling themselves the Guerrilla Girls, and adopting pseudonyms that celebrated great female artists of the past. "We were funny instead of super-serious all the time," a Guerrilla Girl known as "Gertrude Stein" said the other day. "No one knew who we were. And we caused a sensation."

For the next fifteen years or so, the Guerrilla Girls became famous for their sly posters and inspired street theatre. "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met Museum?" one poster asked, noting that less than than five per cent of the modern artists shown there were women but more than eighty-five per cent of the museum's nudes were female. "Our anonymity turned out to be a brilliant move," said "Meret Oppenheim," the early-twentieth-century Surrealist best known for her fur teacup. "People couldn't focus on anyone's individual motives, but focussed instead on the issues we were raising." The collective toured colleges and museums, put on their own art shows, and published a series of books, including "Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes."

As the Girls' dominion began to grow—they incorporated as Guerrilla Girls, Inc., in 1999—tensions developed within the group. After 2000, the Girls weathered what they came to refer to as "the banana split." A branch of the group devoted to fighting discrimination in the theatre now performs around the country under the name Guerrilla Girls on Tour, and an online enterprise split off, too, calling itself GuerrillaGirlsBroadBand. In October, 2003, on behalf of Guerrilla Girls, Inc., two of the original Girls, "Frida Kahlo" and "Käthe Kollwitz," filed a federal lawsuit against the on-tour and broadband entities, and against several of their former colleagues, including Gertrude Stein, charging them with, among other things, copyright and trademark infringement and unjust enrichment. What bothered the defendants and the other Girls as much as the lawsuit was the fact that the two plaintiffs, in filing the case, chose to identify themselves by their real names. As litigants, Kahlo and Kollwitz unmasked themselves to become plain old Jerilea Zempel and Erika Rothenberg.

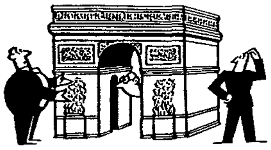
In their forty-five-page complaint, Zempel and Rothenberg assert that they were the "guiding forces" behind the Guerrilla Girls. "The group was informally organized, [and] had no official hierarchy," the plaintiffs say. However, they regard themselves as "senior members," who "handled the vast majority of the day-to-day work for the group." They want the court to stop the broadband enterprise from using the name Guerrilla Girls and are seeking what could be millions of dollars in damages. Last year, Zempel and Rothenberg settled with the theatre group, with the understanding that the troupe would represent itself specifically as the Guerrilla Girls on Tour. (Both plaintiffs declined to comment, citing ongoing settlement discussions.)

The anarchic spirit that animated the Guerrilla Girls has created unique challenges for Judge Louis L. Stanton. For starters, the Judge has observed, it's hard to sort out who's who, especially since most of the Girls want to maintain their anonymity. For example, there has been more than one "Gertrude Stein" in the group; other Girls have changed their pseudonyms in the course of their association; one Girl can't remember her adopted name. "Zora Neale Hurston" appears to be supporting both the plaintiffs and the defendants. Judge Stanton rejected as "bizarre" the defendants' suggestion that they be allowed to testify in his courtroom while wearing their gorilla masks. "Mundane court procedures for adjudicating legal rights and the ownership of property require direct and cross-examination of real persons with real addresses and attributes," the Judge wrote.

The tumult, of course, has detracted from the Girls' original mission of promoting women in the arts. "The issues that we were fighting for haven't gone away," said the Guerrilla Girl known as "Chansonetta Stanley Emmons," a photographer in the early twentieth century, who is not a party to the case. "I don't know whether this is the kind of thing that happens with any kind of group as time passes. All I know is that people are very upset and sad."

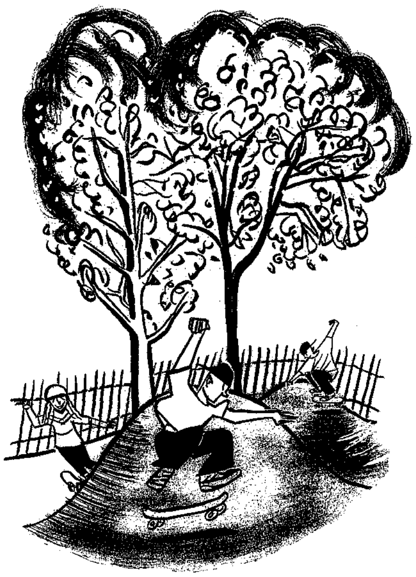
—*Jeffrey Toobin*

ENDANGERED SPECIES DEPT.
THE VILLAGE HILLS



Leonie Haimson, who lives just off Washington Square Park and heads a group of Village residents informally known as Save the Mounds, has been advised that, for public-relations reasons, it might be better to refer to the three asphalt bumps in the southwest corner of the park, threatened with demolition by the Parks Department's renovation plans, by the term "hills." " 'The Hills' sounds less silly," she said the other day, sitting on a bench with some fellow mounds defenders, not far from the objects of their attachment. In truth, the mounds, each of which is about six or eight feet high, are hills to about the same degree that Washington Square Park is square. But they are, as Haimson pointed out, all that the Village offers in the way of elevation; and they are sufficiently beloved for two thousand neighbors to have signed petitions protesting their destruction.

"Generations of children have played on these mounds—my daughter took her first running step on them," Haimson said as her son, Nathaniel, who is six years old, frolicked on the mounds' cracked and weedy surface. Another advocate, Suzanne Dickerson, said that her daughter Erin, now a junior at Yale, had played there avidly for years. "I credit her athletic ability to those mounds," she said. "I really think it developed her calf muscles. She was a competitive track runner all through elementary school, until she switched to swimming."



The mounds

The mounds were created in 1971, when, with the construction of two new children's playgrounds, the park—which until the mid-sixties was a turnaround point for the Fifth Avenue bus line—was rededicated as a place for leisure. Robert Nichols, who was the project's landscape designer, says that the mounds and the play area around them were inspired by the so-called "adventure playgrounds" that he had seen in Scandinavia. Although they were built for children, the mounds have been adopted by Villagers of all ages: hundreds of people mounted them this past winter with sleds in tow; and, until about five years ago, a theatre group used their valley as a natural amphitheatre for productions of Shakespeare and Sophocles. Over the years, however, the mounds fell into disrepair—an instance, Nichols believes, of malign neglect on the part of the Parks Department, inspired by the earlier thwarting by Village activists of Robert Moses's hopes to bisect the park with an extension of Fifth Avenue. "I can't imagine a park without a bunch of mounds, myself," said Nichols, who now lives in Vermont but whose daughter, Eliza, has become one of the mounds' chief protectors. (She told activist colleagues that she was prepared to lie down in the path of bulldozers.)

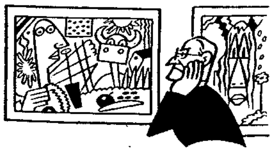
The Parks Department has floated proposals for flattening the mounds for the past two decades. Two years ago, the department again moved to demolish them, but, after a neighborhood outcry, an assurance was given that the mounds would be refurbished. "We raised fifty thousand dollars, and the city never did anything," Haimson said. "And two years later we find out that the new plans for the park are done, and they are eliminated all over again."

Parks Department officials have asserted that the mounds are unsafe and rat-infested, and will be replaced by a playground, although it was earlier reported that the area would become a lawn. "We've consulted exterminators, and they told us that it's easier to control rats in cemented asphalt than it is in a lawn," Haimson said. "Another excuse has been that they are too ugly. Well, they're ugly because they've been allowed to deteriorate." The real objection, she believes, is that the mounds do not fit the Parks Department's latest aesthetic principles. "What the new design tries to do is totally revamp the park into a historically correct version of a nineteenth-century Parisian park," Haimson said. "But the mounds are modern. And when you talk about historical accuracy how far back are you going to go? This was originally a cemetery for poor people. You want to go back as far as that?"

To demonstrate the appeal of the mounds, Haimson and Dickerson scaled one diminutive peak, from which Dickerson descended at a run. "That was so much fun," she said. Kay Rogers, another mounds supporter, remained at ground level and allowed that the topographical variation provided by the mounds, while distinctive in the neighborhood, was not, in the scheme of things, so great. "My grandson was visiting from the Bay Area and I brought him here to see the mounds," she said. "He told me, 'Grandma, you need to go to California.'"

—*Rebecca Mead*

DYNASTIES
MODERN AT NINETY



David Rockefeller, who will be ninety on June 12th, is celebrating his birthday a week early, at the Museum of Modern Art's annual benefit Party in the Garden. He could hardly ask for a more appropriate spot, because, as he likes to say, he was born there. Not in the garden, exactly, but in the private infirmary of the Rockefeller house at 10 West Fifty-fourth Street, a nine-story mansion that used to occupy the site. It was then the largest private residence in the city, and he greatly enjoyed briefing adult visitors on the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance treasures that his father, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had acquired—among them the Unicorn Tapestries, which were installed in the adjoining Rockefeller house, at 12 West Fifty-fourth Street, until they moved uptown to the Cloisters. "Father disliked modern art," David wrote in his 2002 "Memoirs." "He considered it 'unlifelike,' ugly, and disturbing." His mother, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, however, hung modern pictures in her private art gallery on the seventh floor, where her husband wouldn't have to look at them. "She made it a regular gallery," David recalled last week, sitting in his rather cozy office, on the fifty-sixth floor at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. "It was a wonderful education for me."

The youngest of six Rockefeller children (five boys, one girl), David was close to his mother, and he remembers going with her in 1929 to the opening ceremonies of the fledgling Museum of Modern Art, which she and her friends Lillie Bliss and Mary Quinn Sullivan had founded, in its first, modest quarters in the Heckscher Building, on Fifty-seventh Street. "I was a teen-ager when Mother and Mrs. Bliss and Mrs. Sullivan were having conversations about the need for a museum," he said. "And I remember when they brought in Alfred Barr as director. So, in a sense, I've been involved with the museum pretty much throughout its history."

He did not become actively involved, however, until 1948, when his mother died and he was asked to take her seat on the museum's board of trustees. Not wishing to assert himself too vigorously in an institution whose president had been, since 1939, his dynamic older brother Nelson, David at first confined his interests to the museum's garden, which had been laid out along Fifty-fourth Street where two of the Rockefeller houses used to stand. (They were demolished in 1938, after his parents moved to a Park Avenue apartment; eight years later, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., gave the land to the museum.) David asked Philip Johnson to redesign the garden, donated most of the funds for its renovation, and dedicated it to the memory of his mother.

David Rockefeller and his wife, Margaret, became art collectors in the nineteen-forties. They started out conservatively, to say the least—minor eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English portraits, two of which were optimistically attributed to Gainsborough and Sully. "How can you stand to be surrounded by so many little men in red coats?" Marga Barr, Alfred Barr's wife, once asked them. The collection's focus eventually became Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, but there are also important pictures by Picasso, de Kooning, and other, more recent artists whose work David's father would have found appalling. Although David concedes (in "Memoirs") that he, too, is "often startled and even angered and repulsed by the strange directions and provocative content" of contemporary art, he has never questioned the museum's duty to show and acquire such abominations.

Ever since 1958, when Nelson Rockefeller withdrew from the museum to run for governor, David has been, along with his sister-in-law Blanchette, the family's main presence there. He has served as a trustee, as president, and, three times, as chairman of the board of trustees. He recently announced a pledge of a hundred million dollars to the museum's endowment fund—the largest monetary gift in MOMA's history. "He's the lifeblood of the institution," Glenn Lowry, the museum's director, said last week. "Of course, his benefactions range from the hundred million he just pledged us to the great Cézanne 'Boy in a Red Vest,' but his greatest gift to the museum, I think, is his constant belief that the future is going to be at least as interesting as the past. It's amazing, to be ninety years old and that curious."

—*Calvin Tomkins*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Everyone seems to agree that the American health-care system is broken, yet no one can agree on how to fix it. Part of the problem is that there is no American health-care system. Instead, there are hundreds of local health-care systems, each with its own way of treating patients and spending money. Where you live has a profound effect on how much attention your doctor gives you, how many days you spend in the hospital, and what drugs you are (or are not) prescribed. For all the talk about the death of distance and the homogenization of the American landscape, when it comes to health care geography is still destiny.

The recognition of this fact has humble roots. In the nineteen-seventies, a doctor named John Wennberg conducted a study in his home state of Vermont and found that, even in this small and relatively homogeneous corner of the country, doctors in different areas adopted wildly different approaches to the treatment of tonsillitis. In one town, seventy per cent of children had had their tonsils removed by the time they were twelve. In the town next door, it was only twenty per cent. Statistical fluke? Apparently not. Over the next three decades, Wennberg and other researchers documented similarly dramatic geographical variations in far more serious cases—cesarean sections, spinal fusions, mastectomies, coronary-bypass surgeries.

No two patients or groups of patients are exactly alike, so people have always been skeptical of these geographical comparisons. But at this point the evidence is hard to refute. A recent set of Dartmouth Medical School studies, led by Wennberg, looked at the way top teaching hospitals treated elderly patients who were in the last six months of their lives. Patients at Mount Sinai, in New York, spent nearly twice as many days in the hospital as patients at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota. Patients at U.C.L.A. spent three times as many days in the intensive-care unit as patients at Mass General. At the "high-intensity hospitals," patients saw doctors, consulted with specialists, and were given tests far more often than at low-intensity ones. What's more, the extra attention didn't allow patients to live any longer. The weeks in the hospital, the batteries of tests, the regular consultations: they did little but drive up the cost of treatment.

The problem, in other words, isn't so much that different doctors treat patients differently. It's that these differences have a major impact on the cost of health care. No one is opposed to spending more if we could get better results by doing so. But variations in treatment often mean that we're doing the opposite. Medicare, for instance, pays twice as much per patient in Miami as it does in Minneapolis. But, again, Medicare patients in Miami don't live any longer than those in Minneapolis. At a time when everyone's worried about controlling health-care costs, we're spending tens of billions of dollars a year on care that provides little or no benefit to people. And the money we shell out for unnecessary care is money we could spend a lot better somewhere else.

Although doctors are trained all over the country, the market for medical care is not generally a national one. When you need a doctor or a hospital, you look for one nearby. (People will travel to be treated for unusual conditions or rare diseases, and there seems to be less variation in the recommended treatment for these.) This means that, insofar as doctors are competing for patients, they're doing so only against their local peers. The same goes for collaboration. Doctors have unprecedented access to enormous amounts of data on the latest findings in their fields—and clearly this has helped. But in practice doctors, like most people, tend to rely on their own experiences and on those of their colleagues. Once a treatment works well in a few cases and gets established as a local norm, it can be hard to dislodge. Patients, meanwhile, are unlikely to turn down extra treatment. They tend to believe that more is better.

Habit is also reinforced by economics. In medicine, supply often creates its own demand. If a region has many specialists, patients are going to be advised to see them. If a hospital has many beds, patients are going to spend more time in them. There are so many Medicare patients in Florida that doctors, and specialists in particular, have always had an incentive to practice there—and, once they're set up, they'll find something to do. That's why Medicare spends so much more on its patients in Miami than it does in Minneapolis.

There is no easy fix for this problem—at least, not until we figure out how to pay doctors for the quality, rather than the quantity, of the care they provide. We certainly don't want a national board telling doctors what they can and cannot do. (Geographical variations in care, by the way, exist in countries with nationalized health care, too.) The hope is that eventually people will start paying attention to the data and recognize how costly these variations can be. The fact that they haven't yet shows how little medicine has in common with the rest of the economy. In most professions, and even, for that matter, in the scientific community, competition insures that, over time, good ideas are diffused through the whole system: people who don't absorb and adapt fail. But medicine, which is in some ways quintessentially modern, is in other ways a throwback, a bastion of parochialism in a globalized age. And there is reason to think it may remain that way for a long time. As Bones McCoy, on "Star Trek," liked to say, of his twenty-third-century medical techniques, "I'm not a magician, Spock. I'm just an old country doctor."

—*James Surowiecki*

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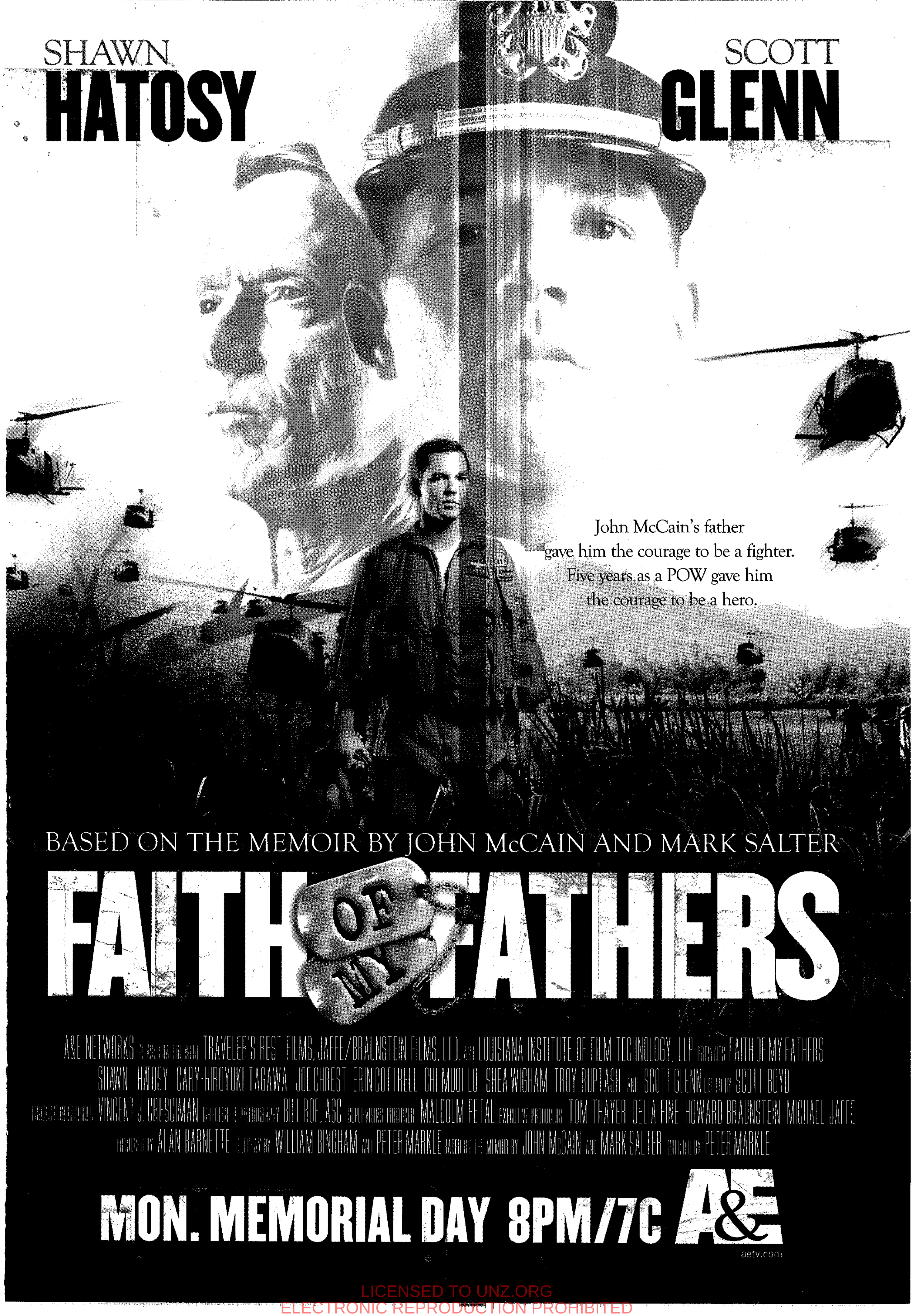
HATOSY

SCOTT
GLENN



John McCain's father
gave him the courage to be a fighter.
Five years as a POW gave him
the courage to be a hero.

BASED ON THE MEMOIR BY JOHN McCAIN AND MARK SALTER

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ANNALS OF SCIENCE

DEVOLUTION

Why intelligent design isn't.

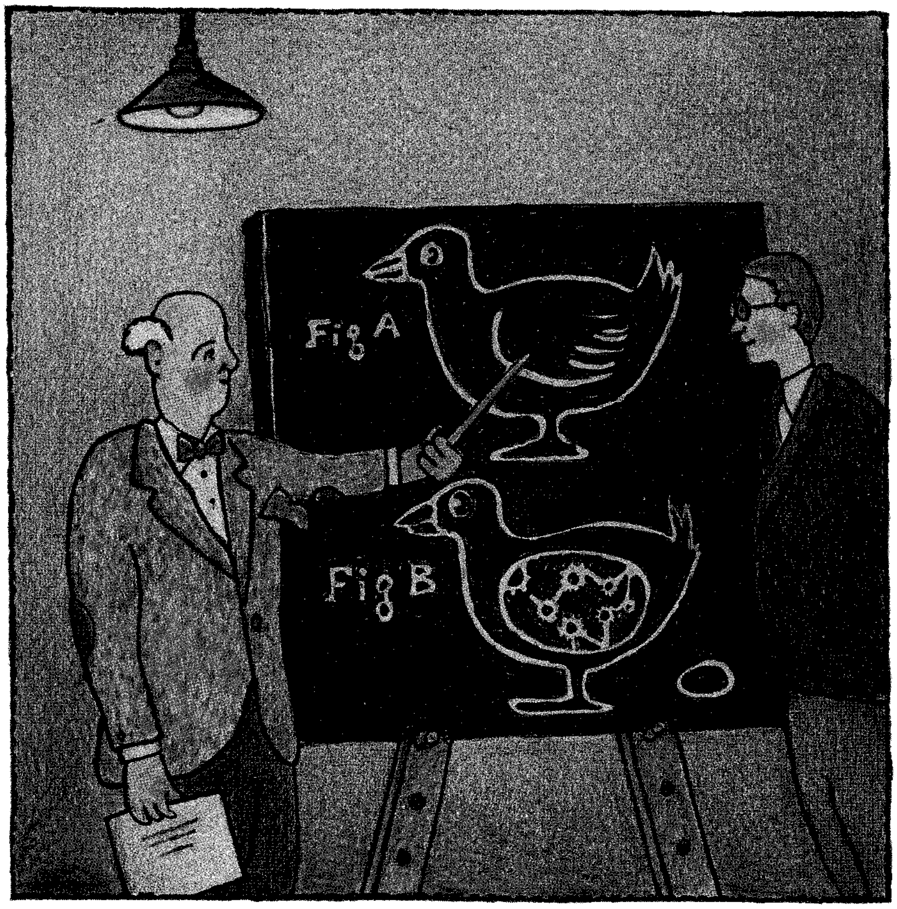
BY H. ALLEN ORR

If you are in ninth grade and live in Dover, Pennsylvania, you are learning things in your biology class that differ considerably from what your peers just a few miles away are learning. In particular, you are learning that Darwin's theory of evolution provides just one possible explanation of life, and that another is provided by something called intelligent design. You are being taught this not because of a recent breakthrough in some scientist's laboratory but because the Dover Area School District's board mandates it. In October, 2004, the board decreed that "students will be made aware of gaps/problems in Darwin's theory and of other theories of evolution including, but not limited to, intelligent design."

While the events in Dover have received a good deal of attention as a sign of the political times, there has been surprisingly little discussion of the science that's said to underlie the theory of intelligent design, often called I.D. Many scientists avoid discussing I.D. for strategic reasons. If a scientific claim can be loosely defined as one that scientists take seriously enough to debate, then engaging the intelligent-design movement on scientific grounds, they worry, cedes what it most desires: recognition that its claims are legitimate scientific ones.

Meanwhile, proposals hostile to evolution are being considered in more than twenty states; earlier this month, a bill was introduced into the New York State Assembly calling for instruction in intelligent design for all public-school students. The Kansas State Board of Education is weighing new standards, drafted by supporters of intelligent design, that would encourage schoolteachers to challenge Darwinism. Senator Rick Santorum, a Pennsylvania Republican, has argued that "intelligent design is a legitimate scientific theory that should be taught in science classes." An I.D.-friendly amendment that he sponsored to the No Child Left Behind Act—requiring public schools to help students understand why evolution "generates so much continuing controversy"—was overwhelmingly approved in the Senate. (The amendment was not included in the version of the bill that was signed into law, but similar language did appear in a conference report that accompanied it.) In the past few years, college students across the country have formed Intelligent Design and Evolution Awareness chapters. Clearly, a policy of limited scientific engagement has failed. So just what is this movement?

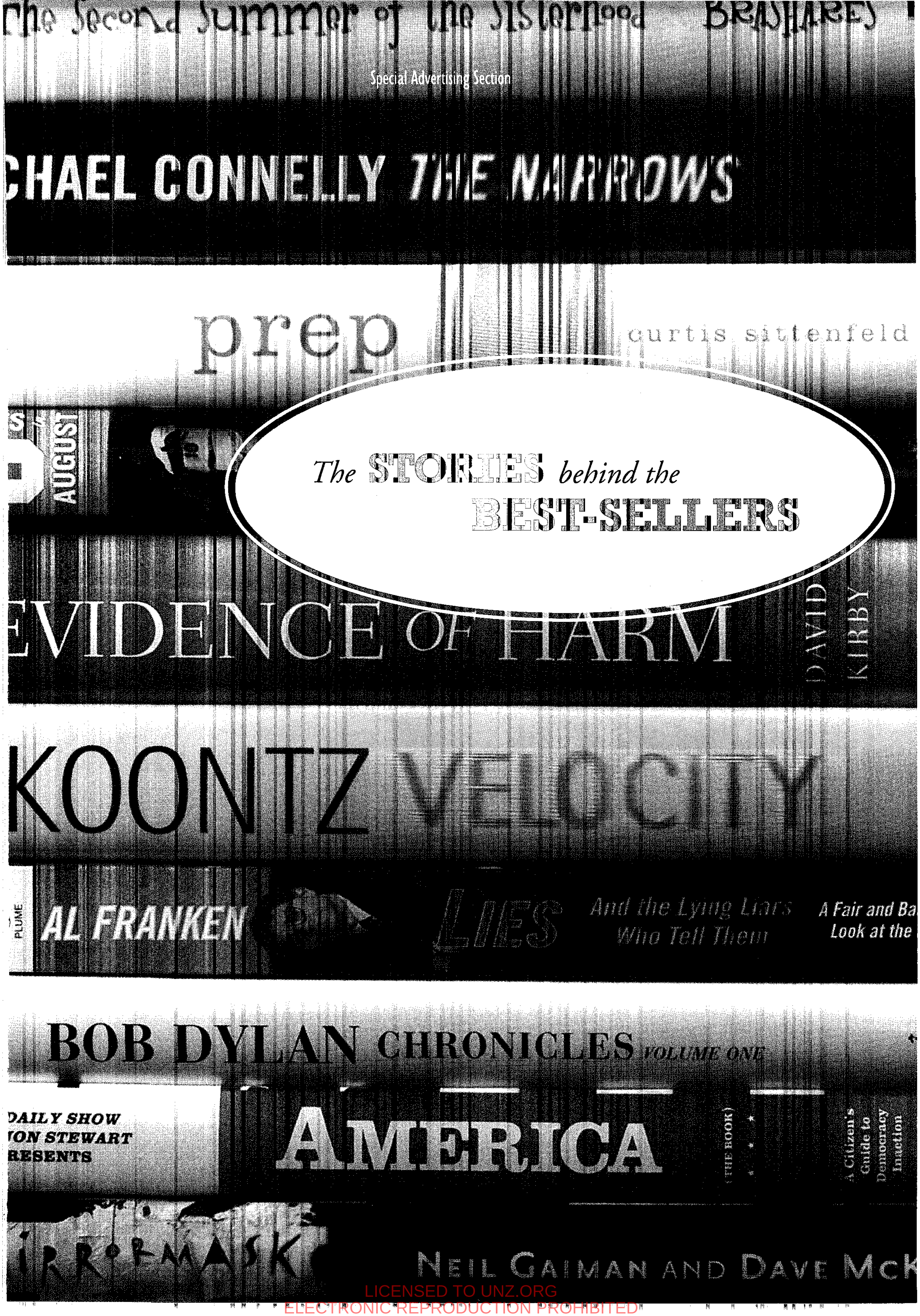
First of all, intelligent design is not what people often assume it is. For one thing, I.D. is not Biblical literalism. Unlike earlier generations of creationists—the so-called Young Earthers and scientific creationists—proponents of intelligent design do not believe that the universe was created in six days, that Earth is ten thousand years old, or that the fossil record was deposited during Noah's flood. (Indeed, they shun the label "creationism" altogether.) Nor does I.D. flatly reject evolution: adherents freely admit that some evolutionary change occurred during the history of life on Earth. Although the movement is loosely allied with, and heavily funded by, various conservative Christian groups—and although I.D. plainly maintains that life was created—it is generally silent about the identity of the creator.



The complexity of living things, I.D.'s defenders say, can't be explained by Darwin.

GLEN BAXTER

The movement's main positive claim is that there are things in the world, most notably life, that cannot be accounted for by known natural causes and show features that, in any other context, we would attribute to intelligence. Living organisms are too complex to be explained by any natural—or, more precisely, by any mindless—pro-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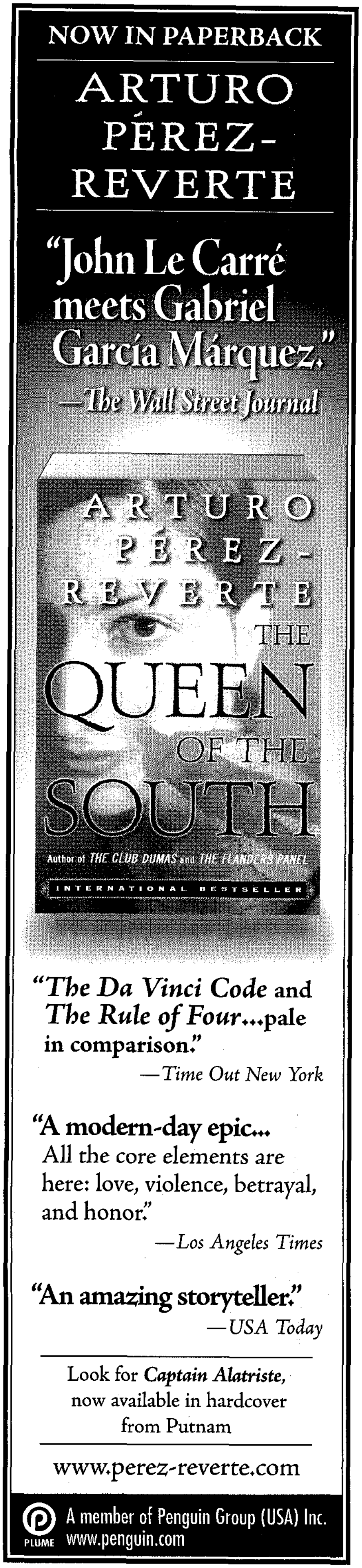

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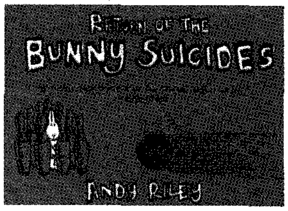

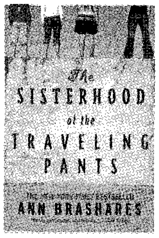

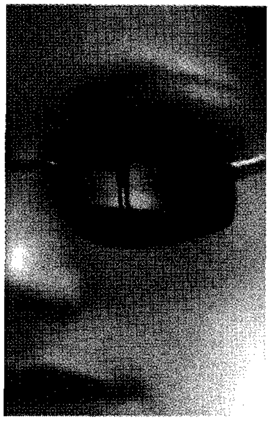

By Meakin Armstrong

Every year publishers fill bookstore shelves with countless novels, thrillers, cookbooks, political tomes, "literary fiction," young-adult titles—an endless variety of books. But at any given moment, only fifteen of them "make the list" and reach best-seller status. How do publishers find the next blockbuster book, like author Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code," a top seller for well over two years? "Publishing companies are engines of enthusiasm," says Chip Gibson, Random House Children's Books president and publisher. "We're always looking for the little sparks around a project; those physical manifestations of that overused but perfect word, 'buzz.' "

What's the writer's track record? Is the editor excited about a certain title? Does everyone want to look at the proposed design for the book jacket? Sometimes, even employee theft can portend success. After all, it's a hopeful sign when advance copies of a book become scarce because publishing house staffers can't wait for the title to reach the stores.

When it comes to determining a best-seller, perhaps novelist and screenwriter William Goldman's well-known dictum about Hollywood and its chase for the next blockbuster film sums it up best: *Nobody knows anything.* Or, as Doubleday Broadway president and publisher Stephen Rubin, whose stable of writers includes John Grisham, Ian McEwan, and other bankable names, explains, "Because publishing is such an intuitive business, I never say that a book will be a best-seller. I say that it has the *potential* of becoming one."

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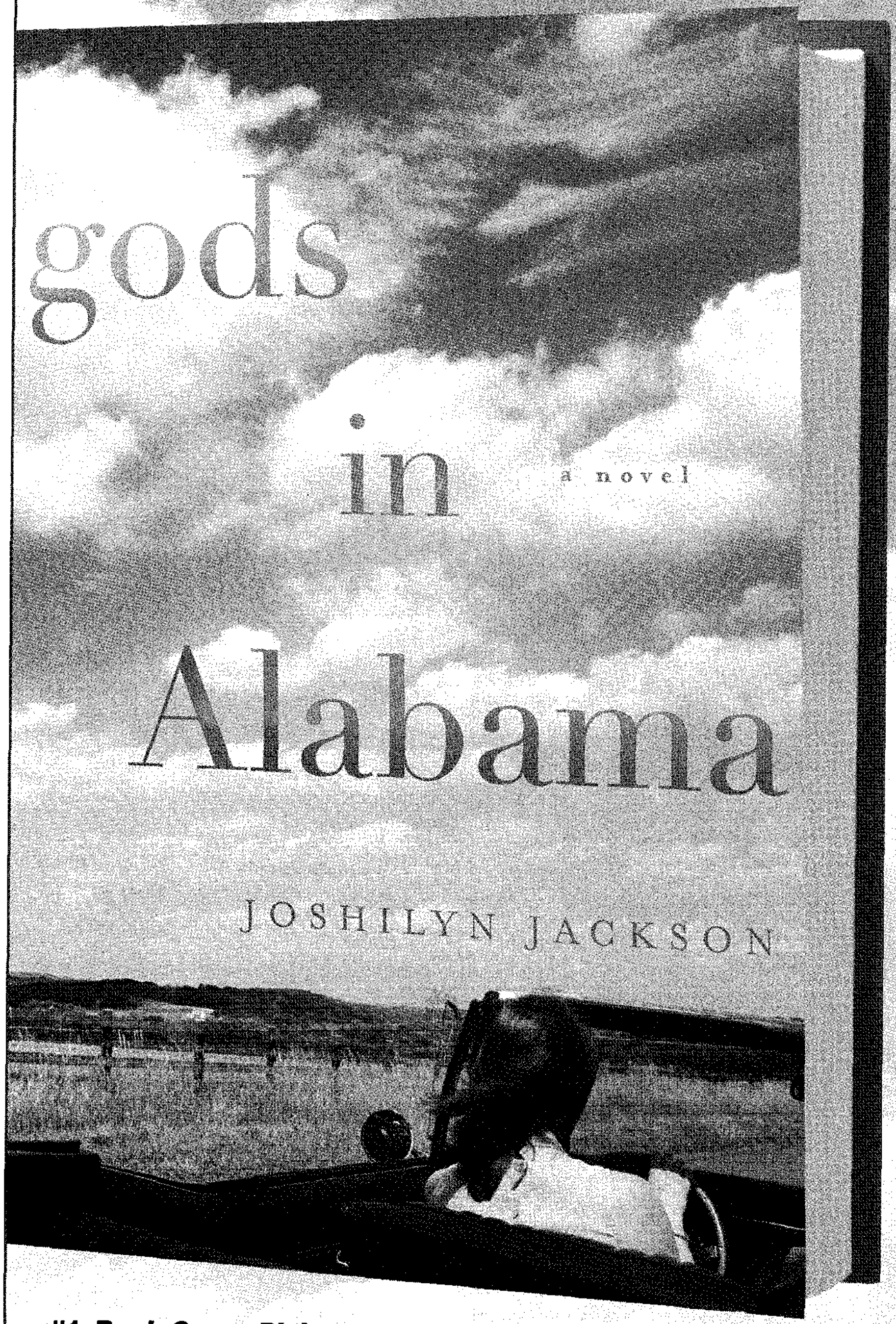

#1 *Book Sense* Pick

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTINE RODIN

"In the grand tradition of Scarlett O'Hara, nothing catches a reader's attention like a sassy Southern woman making deals with God, and that is exactly what Arlene Fleet, the narrator of GODS IN ALABAMA, does."
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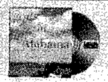

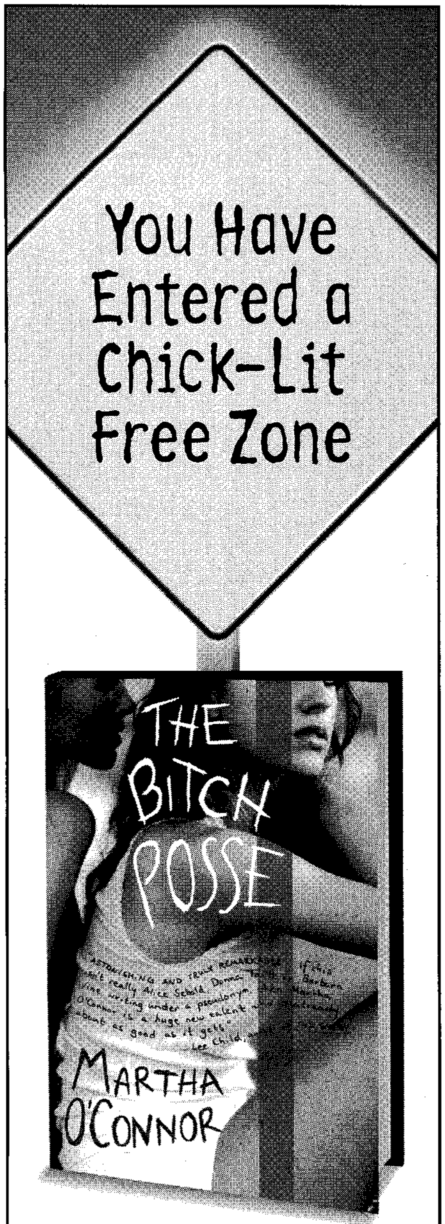
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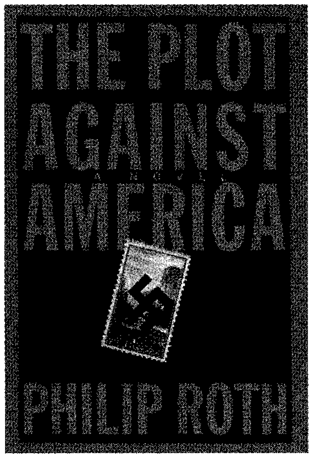

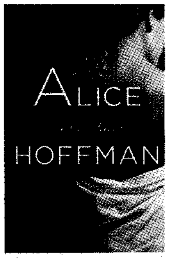

MAKING THE LIST

Perhaps these vagaries are why the best-seller list matters so much: it's the final arbiter, the endpoint, after the voodoo has been spun through marketing. And with so many new books seemingly fork-lifted onto bookshelves everyday, readers apparently appreciate the succinctness of a shortlist. "Say that you're Mr. Commuter on the train and you're involved in real estate," Rubin says. "You read in *The Wall Street Journal* that such-and-such book on real estate is a best-seller. You may well pick it up. So being on the list definitely helps."

The idea of a book reaching No. 1 status didn't exist until 1895, when a chart first appeared in *The Bookman,* a now-defunct magazine. *Publishers Weekly* introduced the oldest continuously published list in 1912. The *New York Times Book Review* didn't produce one until 1942. There are now more than forty such rankings, in publications from the Washington *Post* to *USA Today.*

While lists may vary in methodology, presentation, or focus, generally book editors draw upon a sample of actual sales data from various booksellers, then extrapolate those findings into total sales. Perhaps because it's the most read of them all, the New York *Times* is also the most disputed. Its list doesn't reveal actual sales figures—one book is simply ranked as having sold better than the other. If, therefore, a title sold only *slightly* better than another at its sample stores—even by merely one book—the better-selling title is ranked a level higher. Sales figures are also relative. Books sell better in the fall, and not nearly as well in the summer. Therefore, when a book jacket screams that it's a "New York *Times* No. 1 Best-Seller!" its meaning can vary widely in terms of actual numbers sold.

Making the list likely encourages sales even further, so publishers work their utmost to cut through the competitive morass to make their books best-sellers. For "The Da Vinci Code"—whose success everyone is currently trying to replicate—Doubleday went to great lengths. Ten-thousand advance copies were sent to reviewers, bookstores, and "big mouths" (publishing industry opinion makers) to make sure the book was noticed. One California branch of Barnes & Noble required that each employee read the book and recommend it to their customers.

Doubleday is duplicating its effort with its newest contender, "The Traveler," a thriller by one John Twelve Hawks, an elusive author whose identity is unknown—even by his editor. Twelve Hawks, who according to his bio, "lives off the grid" and whose phone conversations with his editor are filtered through a voice modification system, is a first-time novelist. In the début edition of a planned trilogy, the setting is a consumer society dubbed "The Vast Machine." Its citizens are distracted by fashion trends and entertainment, and are largely unaware that they're being observed and manipulated. A group called "The Travelers," however, battles the all-controlling machine.

In addition to distributing thousands of advance review copies, Doubleday has produced "Traveler"-themed, Internet-based games, and faux Web sites that appear to be created by the book's characters. Doubleday has also produced three thousand DVD publicity kits for "The Traveler," wherein Twelve Hawks, in lieu of a publicity tour, reads from his book, his voice modified and rendered unrecognizable.

Should the mysterious neophyte end up topping the charts, he will be an exception. Début novelists occasionally make it onto the list—six did last year according to *Publishers Weekly*—but more than ninety per cent of its 2004 year-end list included fiction writers who had been there before. With nonfiction, success often depends upon the "platform"—the writer's name-recognition value (Jon Stewart or Jane Fonda) to ring up registers. Commercial viability is often determined by the topic itself ("The South Beach Diet"). While having a celebrity author a book for children "gives you a head start with the media," says Gibson of Random House Children's Books, "kids only care about the book. I think they're harder to hype to than adults."

BREAKING THE CODE

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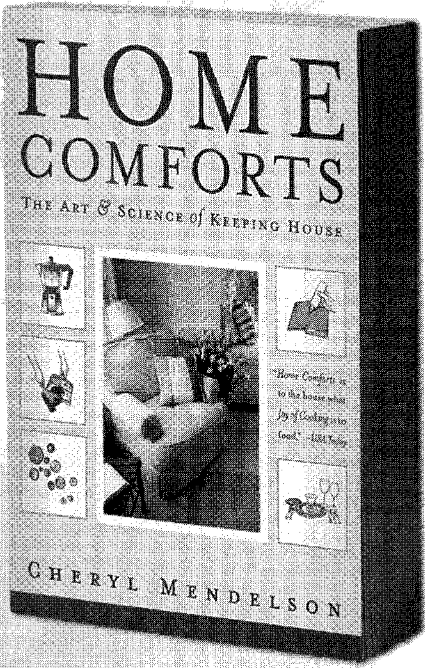
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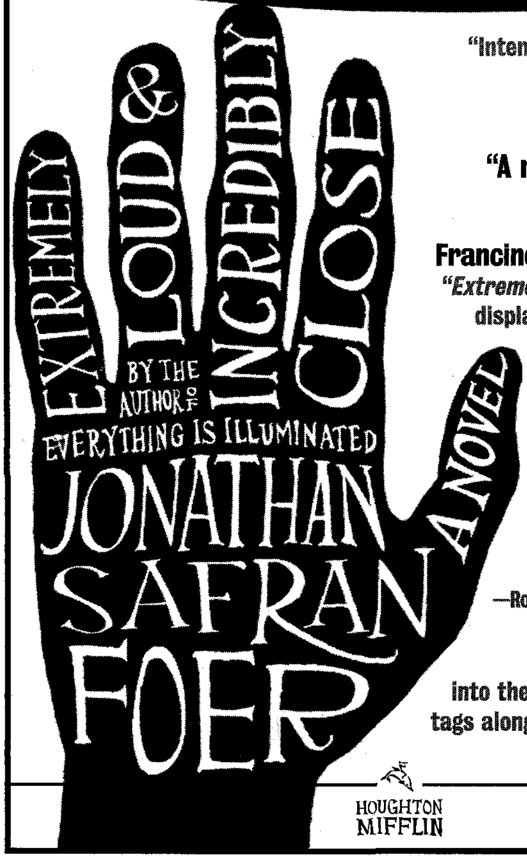

"Intense . . . lively and inventive . . . A treasure."
—*Entertainment Weekly*

"A rich imaginative world."
—Meghan O'Rourke, *Slate*

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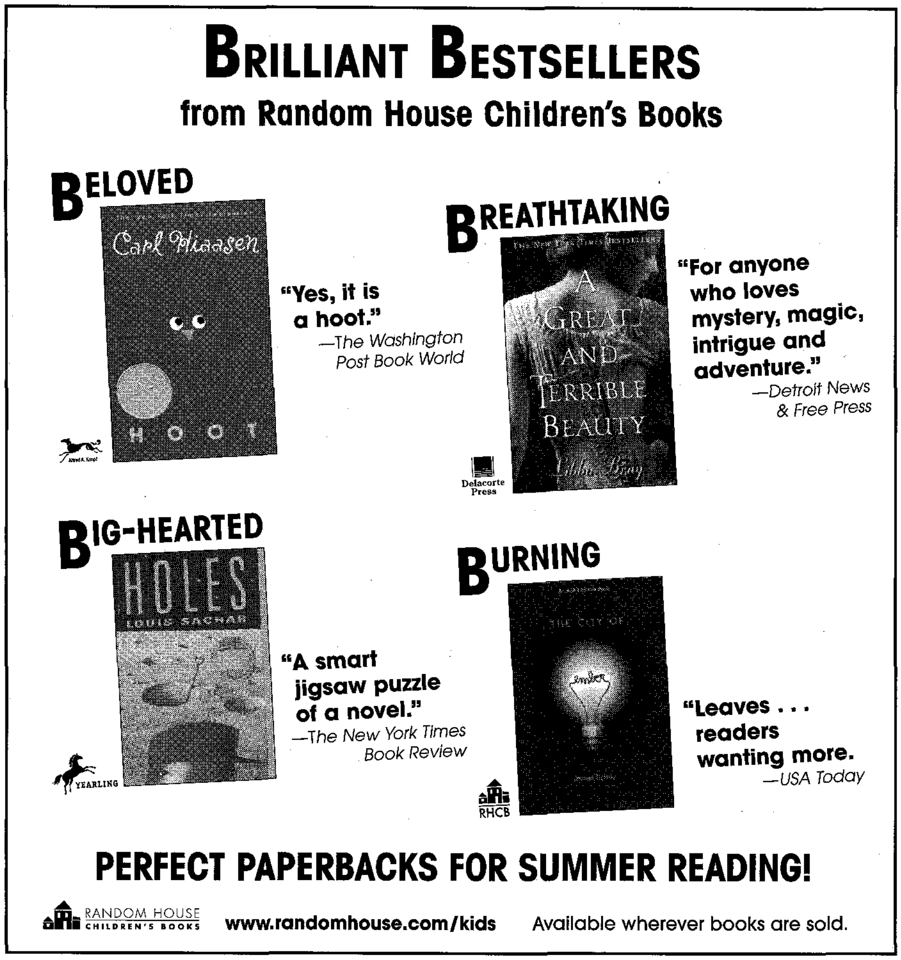
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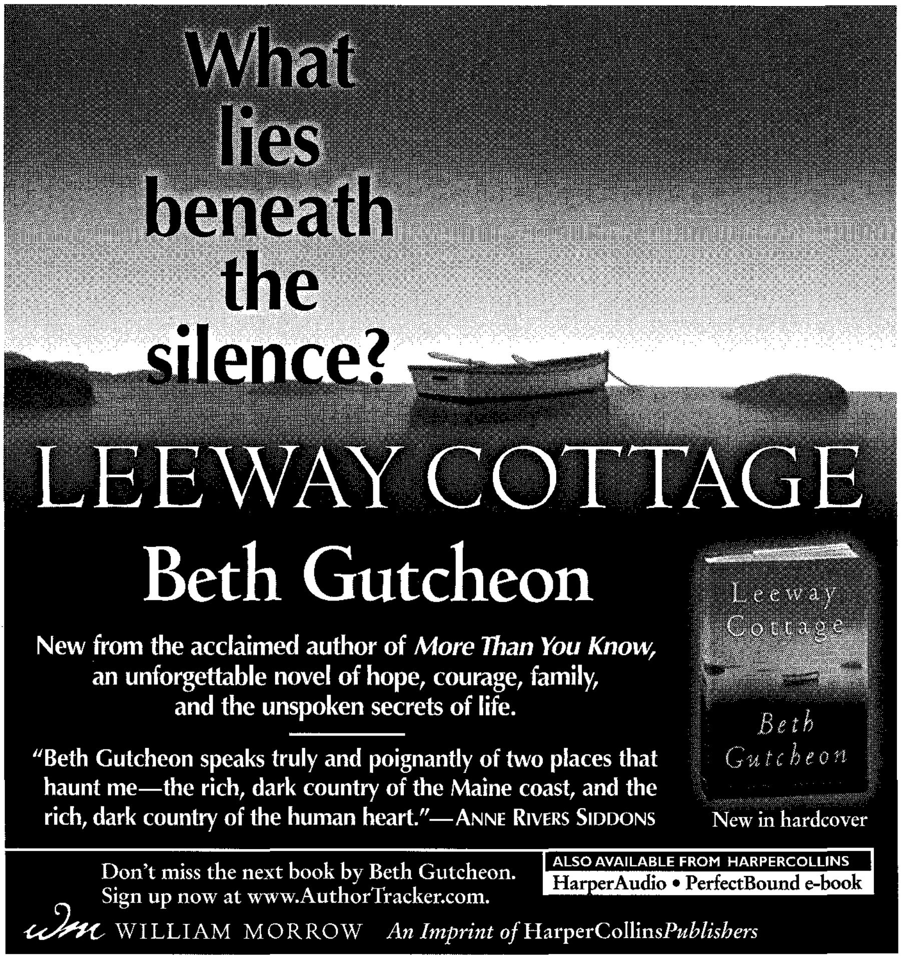
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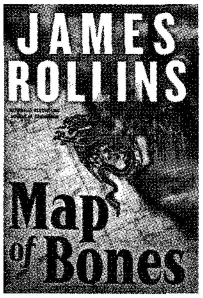
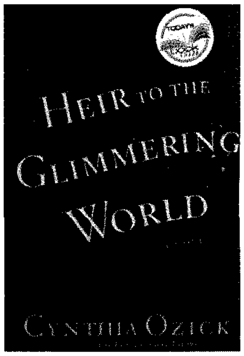


considered good—or even great—have sold well. As Michael Korda writes in "Making the List," a history of the subject, "Those who think of the best-seller list as representing the lowest common denominator have never studied [it] and fail to understand that Americans want to be challenged *and* entertained."

Maybe these lists are reflections of whom we really are at a particular moment in history (or at least what we're interested in reading). In the post-9/11 era, "The Da Vinci Code" may reflect a desire to find the hidden answers to today's confusion, or society's founding principles. (Brown's novel asserts that there is a brotherhood which has, for thousands of years, guarded secrets revealed only through codes). In June, publisher Little, Brown will introduce "The Historian" by début novelist Elizabeth Kostova. The book will also examine a hidden, coded history, but this time with the Dracula myth. In a sense, the "Harry Potter" phenomenon is a part of this growing trend: a secret society of caretakers is among us. Preorders of the sixth book in



the series, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," have already made it No. 1 on the Amazon.com list, even though it won't be released until July 16th.

NOBODY KNOWS ANYTHING

Word-of-mouth is a major factor in influencing sales, but it also can't be controlled. Publishers therefore pin their hopes on ad campaigns. In the larger chain stores, they also purchase optimum floor space for book displays. Fiction, however, doesn't lend itself as easily to a quick, topical conversation on programs such as "The Daily Show," so it's often a tougher sell.

When a bookstore employee sells a title "by hand," (a recommendation based on the seller's well-honed knowledge of customer preferences), it's an important contribution to selling fiction and lesser-known titles. Book reviewers can also have clout. Pat Holt, former San Francisco *Chronicle* book editor and critic, and current editor of holtuncensored.com, says, "The best thing about being a reviewer is the good you can do for first-time novelists and other unknown writers who can't sell their books via talk shows or bookstore signings." On the other hand, when Holt excoriated a book by a repeat best-selling writer, "His loyal readers said, 'Oh joy! A new novel!' And they ran to the store to get their copy, the rats."

As the market continues to churn, publishers will keep pushing to make sure their titles make the list. And, despite herculean efforts, hoped-for blockbusters will disappoint, while book lovers who made Rebecca Wells' "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood" a sleeper hit will find another. Goldman's observation bears repeating: Nobody knows anything. But this year there are three sure bets: the next "Harry Potter" is a certain best-seller; the eventual mass-market paperback of "The Da Vinci Code" will fly off the shelves; and hundreds more novels, thrillers, mysteries, cookbooks, and self-help titles crammed into bulging book racks will battle for the reader's attention. ■

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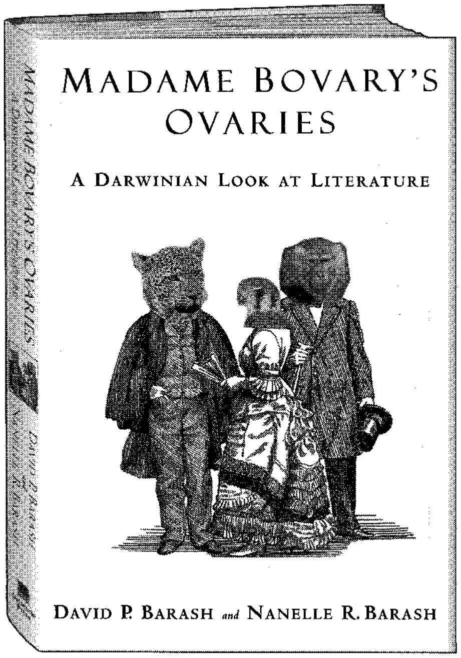
Maybe her biological clock was ticking.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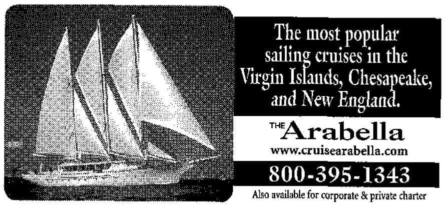
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cess. Instead, the design inherent in organisms can be accounted for only by invoking a designer, and one who is very, very smart.

All of which puts I.D. squarely at odds with Darwin. Darwin's theory of evolution was meant to show how the fantastically complex features of organisms—eyes, beaks, brains—could arise without the intervention of a designing mind. According to Darwinism, evolution largely reflects the combined action of random mutation and natural selection. A random mutation in an organism, like a random change in any finely tuned machine, is almost always bad. That's why you don't, screwdriver in hand, make arbitrary changes to the insides of your television. But, once in a great while, a random mutation in the DNA that makes up an organism's genes slightly improves the function of some organ and thus the survival of the organism. In a species whose eye amounts to nothing more than a primitive patch of light-sensitive cells, a mutation that causes this patch to fold into a cup shape might have a survival advantage. While the old type of organism can tell only if the lights are on, the new type can detect the *direction* of any source of light or shadow. Since shadows sometimes mean predators, that can be valuable information. The new, improved type of organism will, therefore, be more common in the next generation. That's natural selection. Repeated over billions of years, this process of incremental improvement should allow for the gradual emergence of organisms that are exquisitely adapted to their environments and that look for all the world as though they were designed. By 1870, about a decade after "The Origin of Species" was published, nearly all biologists agreed that life had evolved, and by 1940 or so most agreed that natural selection was a key force driving this evolution.

Advocates of intelligent design point to two developments that in their view undermine Darwinism. The first is the molecular revolution in biology. Beginning in the nineteen-fifties, molecular biologists revealed a staggering and unsuspected degree of complexity within the cells that make up all life. This complexity, I.D.'s defenders argue, lies beyond the abilities of Darwinism to explain. Second, they claim that new mathematical findings cast doubt on the power of natural selection. Selection may play a role in evolution, but it cannot accomplish what biologists suppose it can.

These claims have been championed by a tireless group of writers, most of them associated with the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based think tank that sponsors projects in science, religion, and national defense, among other areas. The center's fellows and advisers—including the emeritus law professor Phillip E. Johnson, the philosopher Stephen C. Meyer, and the biologist Jonathan Wells—have published an astonishing number of articles and books that decry the ostensibly sad state of Darwinism and extoll the virtues of the design alternative. But Johnson, Meyer, and Wells, while highly visible, are mainly strategists and popularizers. The scientific leaders of the design movement are two scholars, one a biochemist and the other a mathematician. To assess intelligent design is to assess their arguments.

Michael J. Behe, a professor of biological sciences at Lehigh University (and a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute), is a biochemist who writes technical papers on the structure of DNA. He is the most prominent of the small circle of scientists working on intelligent design, and his arguments are by far the best known. His book "Darwin's Black Box" (1996) was a surprise best-seller and was named by *National Review* as one of the hundred best nonfiction books of the twentieth century. (A little calibration may be useful here; "The Starr Report" also made the list.)

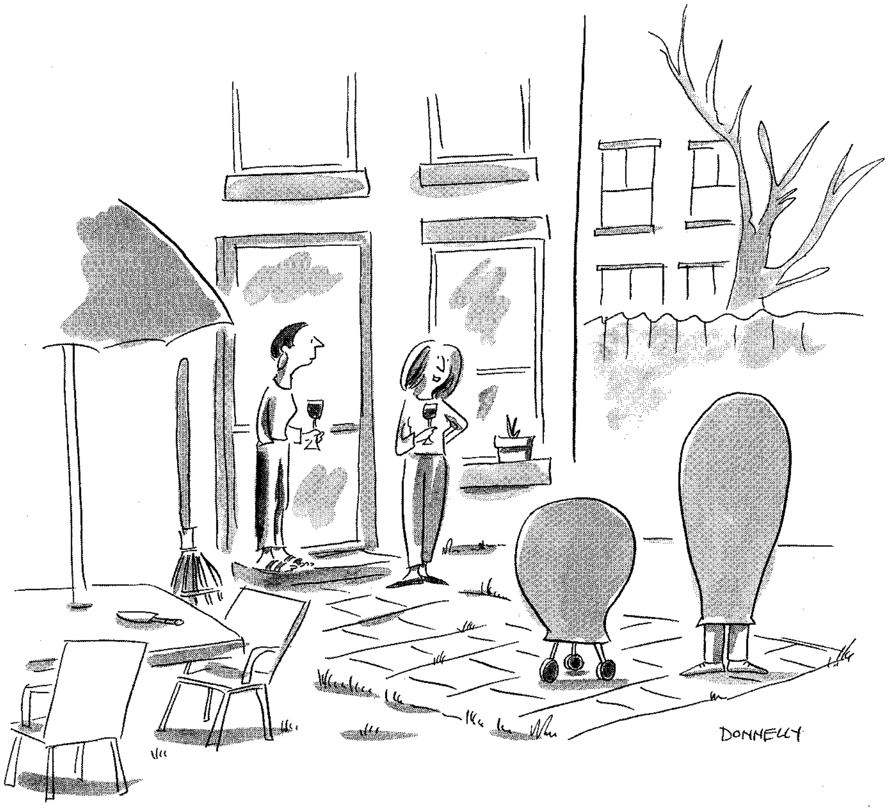
Not surprisingly, Behe's doubts about Darwinism begin with biochemistry. Fifty years ago, he says, any biologist could tell stories like the one about the eye's evolution. But such stories, Behe notes, invariably began with cells, whose own evolutionary origins were essentially left unexplained. This was harmless enough as long as cells weren't qualitatively more complex than the larger, more visible aspects of the eye. Yet when biochemists began to dissect the inner workings of the cell, what they found floored them. A cell is packed full of exceedingly complex structures—hundreds of microscopic machines, each performing a specific job. The "Give me a cell and I'll give you an eye" story told by Darwinists, he says, began to seem suspect: starting with a cell was starting ninety per cent of the way to the finish line.

Behe's main claim is that cells are complex not just in degree but in kind. Cells contain structures that are "irreducibly complex." This means that if you remove any single part from such a structure, the structure no longer functions. Behe offers a simple, nonbiological example of an irreducibly complex object: the mousetrap. A mousetrap has several parts—platform, spring, catch, hammer, and hold-down bar—and all of them have to be in place for the trap to work. If you remove the spring from a mousetrap, it isn't slightly worse at killing mice; it doesn't kill them at all. So, too, with the bacterial flagellum, Behe argues. This flagellum is a tiny propeller attached to the back of some bacteria. Spinning at more than twenty thousand r.p.m.s, it motors the bacterium through its aquatic world. The flagellum comprises roughly thirty different proteins, all precisely arranged, and if any one of them is removed the flagellum stops spinning.

In "Darwin's Black Box," Behe maintained that irreducible complexity presents Darwinism with "unbridgeable chasms." How, after all, could a gradual process of incremental improvement build something like a flagellum, which needs *all* its parts in order to work? Scientists, he argued, must face up to the fact that "many biochemical systems cannot be built by natural selection working on mutations." In the end, Behe concluded that irreducibly complex cells arise the same way as irreducibly complex mousetraps—someone designs them. As he put it in a recent *Times* Op-Ed piece: "If it looks, walks, and quacks like a duck, then, absent compelling evidence to the contrary, we have warrant to conclude it's a duck. Design should not be overlooked simply because it's so obvious." In "Darwin's Black Box," Behe speculated that the designer might have assembled the first cell, essentially solving the problem of irreducible complexity, after which evolution might well have proceeded by more or less conventional means. Under Behe's brand of creationism, you might still be an ape that evolved on the African savanna; it's just that your cells harbor micro-machines engineered by an unnamed intelligence some four billion years ago.

But Behe's principal argument soon ran into trouble. As biologists pointed out, there are several different ways that Darwinian evolution can build irreducibly complex systems. In one, elaborate structures may evolve for one reason and then get co-opted for some entirely different, irreducibly complex function. Who says those thirty flagellar proteins weren't present in bacteria long before bacteria sported flagella? They may have been performing other jobs in the cell and only later got drafted into flagellum-building. Indeed, there's now strong evidence that several flagellar proteins once played roles in a type of molecular pump found in the membranes of bacterial cells.

Behe doesn't consider this sort of "indirect" path to irreducible complexity—in which parts perform one function and then switch to another—terribly plausible. And he essentially rules out the alternative possibility of a direct Darwinian path: a path, that is, in which Darwinism builds an irreducibly complex structure while selecting all along for the same biological function. But biologists have shown that direct paths to irreducible complexity are possible, too. Suppose a part gets added to a system merely because the part improves the system's performance; the part is not, at this stage, essential for function. But, because subsequent evolution builds on this addition, a part that was at first just advantageous might *become* essential. As this process is repeated through evolutionary time, more and more parts that were once merely beneficial become necessary. This idea was first set forth by H. J. Muller, the Nobel Prize-winning geneticist, in 1939, but it's a familiar process in the development of human technologies. We add new parts like global-positioning systems to cars not because they're necessary but because they're nice. But no one would be surprised if, in fifty years, computers that rely on G.P.S. actually drove our cars. At that point, G.P.S. would no longer be an attractive option; it would be an essential piece of automotive technology. It's important to see that this process is thoroughly Dar-



"I brought out the grill and Henry, but I haven't uncovered them yet."

winian: each change might well be small and each represents an improvement.

Design theorists have made some concessions to these criticisms. Behe has confessed to "sloppy prose" and said he hadn't meant to imply that irreducibly complex systems "by definition" cannot evolve gradually. "I quite agree that my argument against Darwinism does not add up to a logical proof," he says—though he continues to believe that Darwinian paths to irreducible complexity are exceedingly unlikely. Behe and his followers now emphasize that, while irreducibly complex systems can in principle evolve, biologists can't reconstruct in convincing detail just how any such system did evolve.

What counts as a sufficiently detailed historical narrative, though, is altogether subjective. Biologists actually know a great deal about the evolution of biochemical systems, irreducibly complex or not. It's significant, for instance, that the proteins that typically make up the parts of these systems are often similar to one another. (Blood clotting—another of Behe's examples of irreducible complexity—involves at least twenty proteins, several of which are similar, and all of which are needed to make clots, to localize or remove clots, or to prevent the runaway clotting of all blood.) And biologists understand why these proteins are so similar. Each gene in an organism's genome encodes a particular protein. Occasionally, the stretch of DNA that makes up a particular gene will get accidentally copied, yielding a genome that includes two versions of the gene. Over many generations, one version of the gene will often keep its original function while the other one slowly changes by mutation and natural selection, picking up a new, though usually related, function. This process of "gene duplication" has given rise to entire families of proteins that have similar functions; they often act in the same biochemical pathway or sit in the same cellular structure. There's no doubt that gene duplication plays an extremely important role in the evolution of biological complexity.

It's true that when you confront biologists with a particular complex structure like the flagellum they sometimes have a hard time saying which part appeared before which other parts. But then it can be hard, with any complex historical process, to reconstruct the exact order in which events occurred, especially when, as in evolution, the addition of new parts encourages the modification of old ones. When you're looking at a bustling urban street, for example, you probably can't tell which shop went into business first. This is partly because many businesses now depend on each other and partly because new shops trigger changes in old ones (the new sushi place draws twenty-somethings who demand wireless Internet at the café next door). But it would be a little rash to conclude that all the shops must have begun business on the same day or that some Unseen Urban Planner had carefully determined just which business went where.

The other leading theorist of the new creationism, William A. Dembski, holds a Ph.D. in mathematics, another in philosophy, and a master of divinity in theology. He has been a research professor in the conceptual foundations of science at Baylor University, and was recently appointed to the new Center for Science and Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. (He is a longtime senior fellow at the Discovery Institute as well.) Dembski publishes at a staggering pace. His books—including "The Design Inference," "Intelligent Design," "No Free Lunch," and "The Design Revolution"—are generally well written and packed with provocative ideas.

According to Dembski, a complex object must be the result of intelligence if it was the product neither of chance nor of necessity. The novel "Moby Dick," for example, didn't arise by chance (Melville didn't scribble random letters), and it wasn't the necessary consequence of a physical law (unlike, say, the fall of an apple). It was, instead, the result of Melville's intelligence. Dembski argues that there is a reliable way to recognize such products of intelligence in the natural world. We can conclude that an object was intelligently designed, he says, if it shows "specified complexity"—complexity that matches an "independently given pattern." The sequence of letters "JKXVCJUDOPLVM" is certainly complex: if you randomly type thirteen letters, you are very unlikely to arrive at this particular sequence. But it isn't *specified:* it doesn't match any independently given sequence of letters. If, on the other hand, I ask you for the first sentence of "Moby Dick" and you type the letters "CALLMEISHMAEL," you have produced something that is both complex and specified. The sequence you

TENNIS BALL

I parked by the grave in September, under oaks and birches,
and said hello again, and went walking with Gussie

past markers, roses, and the grave with plastic chickens.
(Somebody loved somebody who loved chickens.)

Gus stopped and stared: a woman's long bare legs
stretched up at the edge of the graveyard, a man's body

heaving between them. Gus considered checking them out,
so I clicked my fingers, softly as I could, to distract him,

and became the unintending source of coitus interruptus.
Walking to the car, I peeked. She was re-starting him, her

head riding up and down. It was a fine day, leaves red,
Gus healthy and gay, refusing to give up his tennis ball.

—*Donald Hall*

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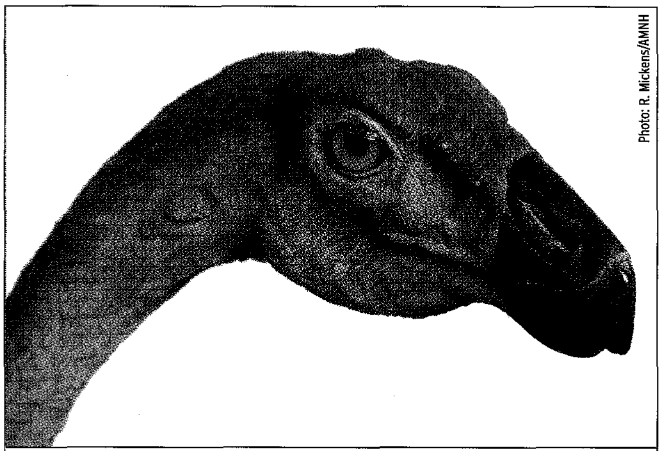
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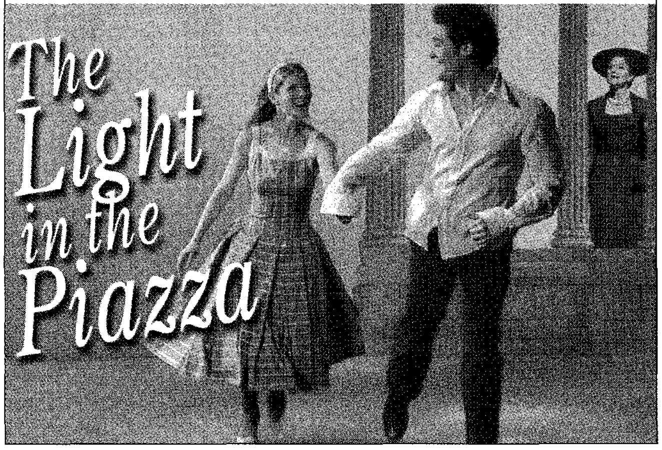
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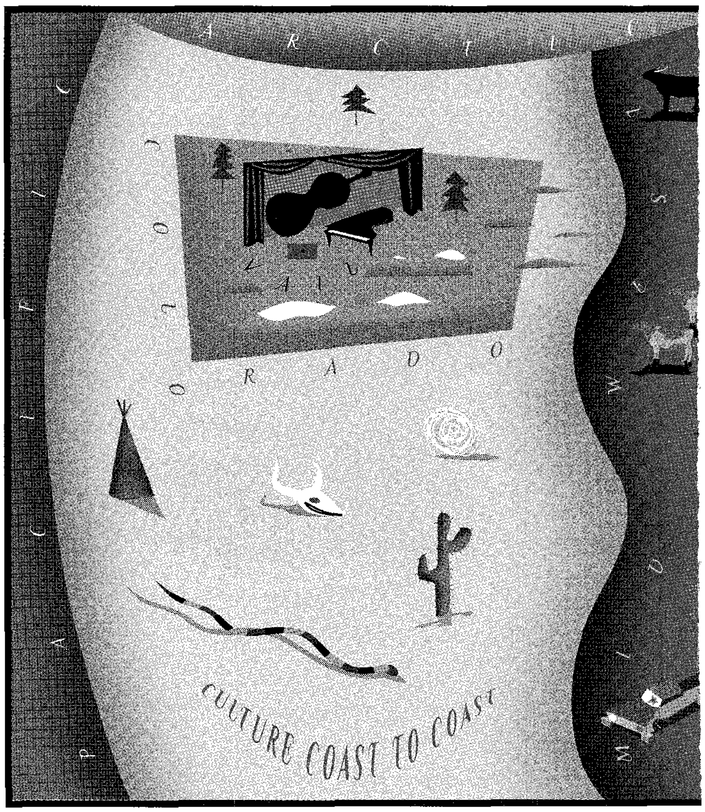

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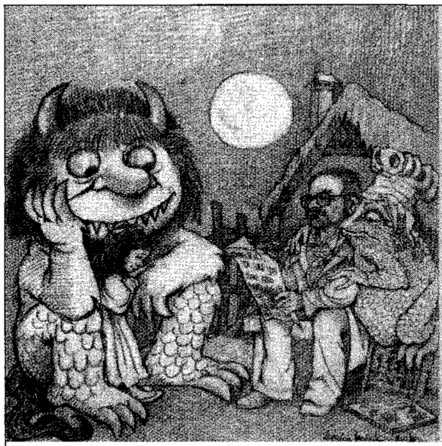

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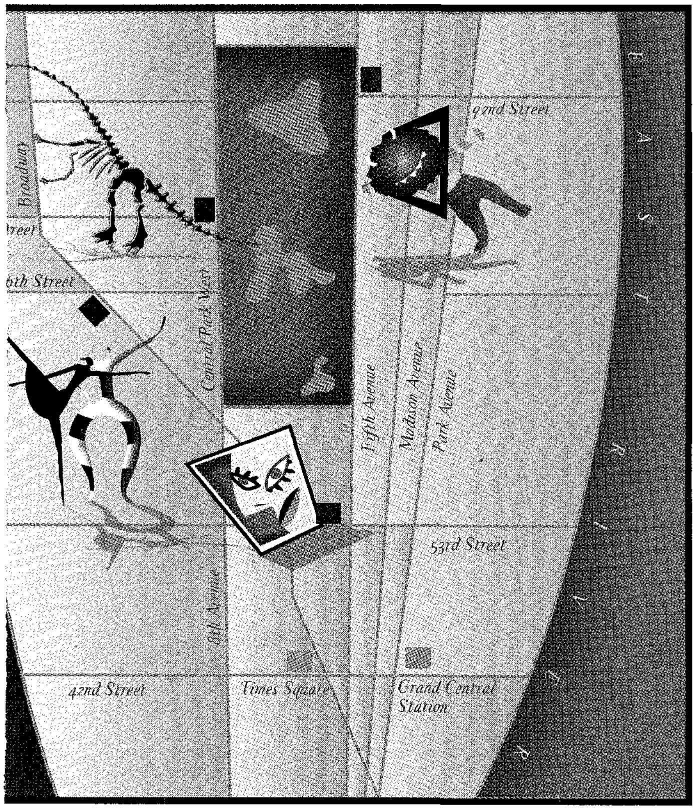
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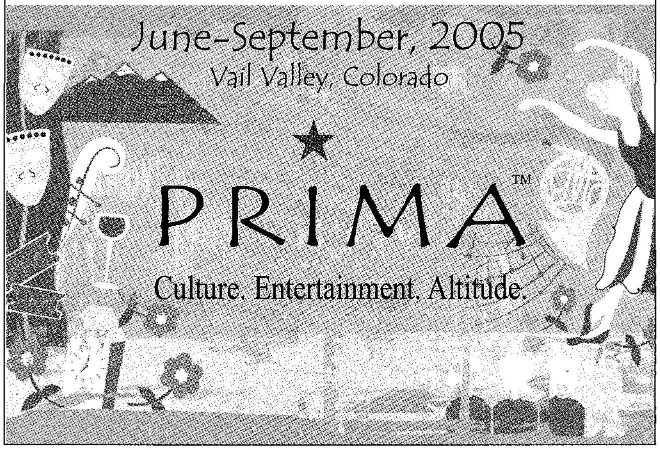
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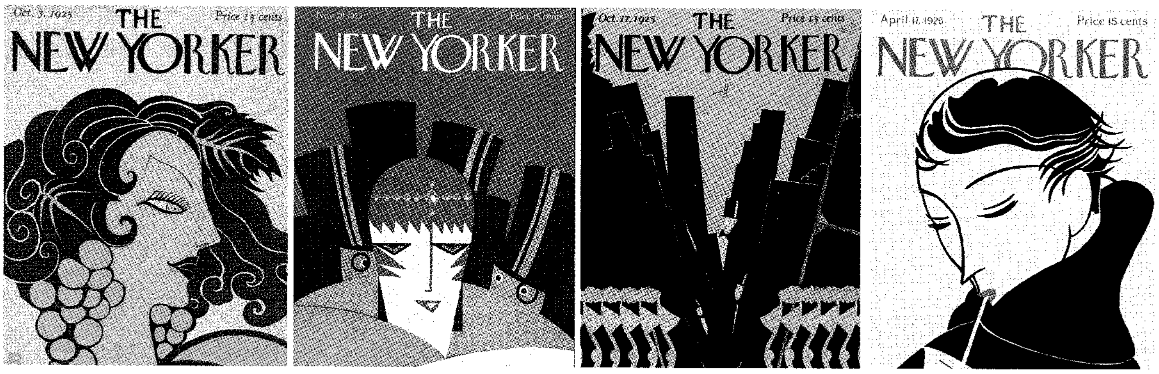
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typed is unlikely to arise by chance alone, and it matches an independent target sequence (the one written by Melville). Dembski argues that specified complexity, when expressed mathematically, provides an unmistakable signature of intelligence. Things like "CALLMEISHMAEL," he points out, just don't arise in the real world without acts of intelligence. If organisms show specified complexity, therefore, we can conclude that they are the handiwork of an intelligent agent.

For Dembski, it's telling that the sophisticated machines we find in organisms match up in astonishingly precise ways with recognizable human technologies. The eye, for example, has a familiar, cameralike design, with recognizable parts—a pinhole opening for light, a lens, and a surface on which to project an image—all arranged just as a human engineer would arrange them. And the flagellum has a motor design, one that features recognizable O-rings, a rotor, and a drive shaft. Specified complexity, he says, is there for all to see.

Dembski's second major claim is that certain mathematical results cast doubt on Darwinism at the most basic conceptual level. In 2002, he focussed on so-called No Free Lunch, or N.F.L., theorems, which were derived in the late nineties by the physicists David H. Wolpert and William G. Macready. These theorems relate to the efficiency of different "search algorithms." Consider a search for high ground on some unfamiliar, hilly terrain. You're on foot and it's a moonless night; you've got two hours to reach the highest place you can. How to proceed? One sensible search algorithm might say, "Walk uphill in the steepest possible direction; if no direction uphill is available, take a couple of steps to the left and try again." This algorithm insures that you're generally moving upward. Another search algorithm—a so-called blind search algorithm—might say, "Walk in a random direction." This would sometimes take you uphill but sometimes down. Roughly, the N.F.L. theorems prove the surprising fact that, averaged over all possible terrains, no search algorithm is better than any other. In some landscapes, moving uphill gets you to higher ground in the allotted time, while in other landscapes moving randomly does, but on average neither outperforms the other.

Now, Darwinism can be thought of as a search algorithm. Given a problem—adapting to a new disease, for instance—a population uses the Darwinian algorithm of random mutation plus natural selection to search for a solution (in this case, disease resistance). But, according to Dembski, the N.F.L. theorems prove that this Darwinian algorithm is no better than any other when confronting all possible problems. It follows that, over all, Darwinism is no better than blind search, a process of utterly random change unaided by any guiding force like natural selection. Since we don't expect blind change to build elaborate machines showing an exquisite coördination of parts, we have no right to expect Darwinism to do so, either. Attempts to sidestep this problem by, say, carefully constraining the class of challenges faced by organisms inevitably involve sneaking in the very kind of order that we're trying to explain—something Dembski calls the displacement problem. In the end, he argues, the N.F.L. theorems and the displacement problem mean that there's only one plausible source for the design we find in organisms: intelligence. Although Dembski is somewhat noncommittal, he seems to favor a design theory in which an intelligent agent programmed design into early life, or even into the early universe. This design then unfolded through the long course of evolutionary time, as microbes slowly morphed into man.

Dembski's arguments have been met with tremendous enthusiasm in the I.D. movement. In part, that's because an innumerate public is easily impressed by a bit of mathematics. Also, when Dembski is wielding his equations, he gets to play the part of the hard scientist busily correcting the errors of those soft-headed biologists. (Evolutionary biology actually features an extraordinarily sophisticated body of mathematical theory, a fact not widely known because neither of evolution's great popularizers—Richard Dawkins and the late Stephen Jay Gould—did much math.) Despite all the attention, Dembski's mathematical claims about design and Darwin are almost entirely beside the point.

The most serious problem in Dembski's account involves specified complexity. Organisms aren't trying to match any "independently given pattern": evolution has no goal, and the history of life isn't trying to get anywhere. If building a sophisticated structure like an eye increases the number of children produced, evolution may well build an eye. But if destroying a sophisticated structure like the eye increases the number of children produced, evolution will just as happily destroy the eye. Species of fish and crustaceans that have moved into the total darkness of caves, where eyes are both unnecessary and costly, often have degenerate eyes, or eyes that begin to form only to be covered by skin—crazy contraptions that no intelligent agent would design. Despite all the loose talk about design and machines, organisms aren't striving to realize some engineer's blueprint; they're striving (if they can be said to strive at all) only to have more offspring than the next fellow.

Another problem with Dembski's arguments concerns the N.F.L. theorems. Recent work shows that these theorems don't hold in the case of co-evolution, when two or more species evolve in response to one another. And most evolution is surely co-evolution. Organisms do not spend most of their time adapting to rocks; they are perpetually challenged by, and adapting to, a rapidly changing suite of viruses, parasites, predators, and prey. A theorem that doesn't apply to these situations is a theorem whose relevance to biology is unclear. As it happens, David Wolpert, one of the authors of the N.F.L. theorems, recently denounced Dembski's use of those theorems as "fatally informal and imprecise." Dembski's apparent response has been a tactical retreat. In 2002, Dembski triumphantly proclaimed, "The No Free Lunch theorems dash any hope of generating specified complexity via evolutionary algorithms." Now he says, "I certainly never argued that the N.F.L. theorems provide a direct refutation of Darwinism."

Those of us who have argued with I.D. in the past are used to such shifts of emphasis. But it's striking that Dembski's views on the history of life contradict Behe's. Dembski believes that Darwinism is incapable of building anything interesting; Behe seems to believe that, given a cell, Darwinism might well have built you and me. Although proponents of I.D. routinely inflate the significance of minor squabbles among evolutionary biologists (did the peppered moth evolve dark color as a defense against birds or for other reasons?), they seldom acknowledge their own, often major differences of opinion. In the end, it's hard to view intelligent design as a coherent movement in any but a political sense.

It's also hard to view it as a real research program. Though people often picture science as a collection of clever theories, scientists are generally staunch pragmatists: to scientists, a good theory is one that inspires new experiments and provides unexpected insights into familiar phenomena. By this standard, Darwinism is one of the best theories in the history of science: it has produced countless important experiments (let's re-create a natural species in the lab—yes, that's been done) and sudden insight into once puzzling patterns (*that's* why there are no native land mammals on oceanic islands). In the nearly ten years since the publication of Behe's book, by contrast, I.D. has inspired no nontrivial experiments and has provided no surprising insights into biology. As the years pass, intelligent design looks less and less like the science it claimed to be and more and more like an extended exercise in polemics.

In 1999, a document from the Discovery Institute was posted, anonymously, on the Internet. This Wedge Document, as it came to be called, described not only the institute's long-term goals but its strategies for accomplishing them. The document begins by labelling the idea that human beings are created in the image of God "one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built." It goes on to decry the catastrophic legacy of Darwin, Marx, and Freud—the alleged fathers of a "materialistic conception of reality" that eventually "infected virtually every area of our culture." The mission of the Discovery Institute's scientific wing is then spelled out: "nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies." It seems fair to conclude that the Discovery Institute has set its sights a bit higher than, say, reconstructing the origins of the bacterial flagellum.

The intelligent-design community is usually far more circumspect in its pronouncements. This is not to say that it eschews discussion of religion; indeed, the intelligent-design literature regularly insists that Darwinism represents a thinly veiled attempt to foist a secular religion—godless materialism—on Western culture. As it happens, the idea that Darwinism is yoked to atheism, though popular, is also wrong. Of the five founding fathers of twentieth-century evolutionary biology—Ronald Fisher, Sewall Wright, J. B. S. Haldane, Ernst Mayr, and Theodosius Dobzhansky—one was a devout Anglican who preached sermons and published articles in church magazines, one a practicing Unitarian, one a dabbler in Eastern mysticism, one an apparent atheist, and one a member of the Russian Orthodox Church and the author of a book on religion and science. Pope John Paul II himself acknowledged, in a 1996 address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, that new research "leads to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis." Whatever larger conclusions one thinks *should* follow from Darwinism, the historical fact is that evolution and religion have often coexisted. As the philosopher Michael Ruse observes, "It is simply not the case that people take up evolution in the morning, and become atheists as an encore in the afternoon."

Biologists aren't alarmed by intelligent design's arrival in Dover and elsewhere because they have all sworn allegiance to atheistic materialism; they're alarmed because intelligent design is junk science. Meanwhile, more than eighty per cent of Americans say that God either created human beings in their present form or guided their development. As a succession of intelligent-design proponents appeared before the Kansas State Board of Education earlier this month, it was possible to wonder whether the movement's scientific coherence was beside the point. Intelligent design has come this far by faith. ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

CHINESE ARITHMETIC

BY IAN FRAZIER

> In the event of an erection that persists longer than four hours, the patient should seek immediate medical assistance.
> —*Precautionary statement in pharmaceutical ad.*

Sept. 8, 1963, 8:45 A.M.–June 14, 1964, 3:30 P.M. (eighth grade). Debbie Avery, Cammie Flanders, Laurel Gainer, Charmaine Day, Diane Persico, Nancy Thiel, Gail Zobel, Doreen McConaghey. Discomfort in classroom approaching agony. Homeopathic remedies tried.

July 19, 1967, 9:38 P.M.–Oct. 12, 1968, 7:10 P.M. Dating Stacie Rasmussen. Lumbar manipulation partially successful.

Sept. 25, 1969, 5:16 P.M.–sometime in the mid-nineteen-seventies (college; penumbra of the sixties). Body painting; girl in art-supply store in Cambridge; photo spread in *Evergreen Review*, etc. Hindu water treatment relatively useless.

May 12, 1977, 10:18 P.M.–May 13, 1977, 11:30 A.M. Anne Lenhart in leather skirt at party on Broome Street. Severe indisposition; patient able to walk only while bent over and moaning. "Talking cure" ineffective.

Apr. 4, 1978, 9:30 P.M.–Apr. 5, 1978, 1:17 A.M. Sudden sharp onset as a result of watching program "Maude" on TV (Adrienne Barbeau). Afflicted individual turned off set, tried to rest quietly. Swiss astringents a last resort.

Oct. 10, 1978, 9 A.M.–Oct. 10, 1978, 4 P.M. Painful recurrence while attempting to take LSAT exam (sound of test monitor's hosiery). Reichian orgone-box therapy made things worse.

In subsequent years of adulthood and middle age, sufferer accommodated chronic condition as best he could. Advent of women's fashion craze for extremely tight, low-slung jeans began a difficult period in the case history. Subject had to remain seated almost all the time. Chafing, pain, and occasional loss of verbal and motor skills affected job performance and life style. Then they started wearing those *thong* dealies that are visible in back above the belt line. Unable to cope, patient finally presented at clinic for treatment with classic 24/7 stiffy.

Initial diagnostic exam showed patient's condition rated a code blue on the Guccione hardness-tumescence continuum, at a level described as "harder than Chinese arithmetic"—in other words, a major hard wiener, bearing more surface tension p.s.i. than the standard semiflaccid routney (as erectographers call it), or than the ordinary, garden-variety boner. Characteristic "pup-tent" effect could be clearly seen when patient finally took hands out of pants pockets. In describing sensations accompanying the disorder, patient used terms frequently associated with it, such as "Oh, ow, ouch, why me? Salma Hayek, girl in the vodka ad, photo of Mrs. Jason Kidd in the *News*, please spare me, Kylie Minogue, oh Jesus," and so on.

Clinicians determined main cause of problem was patient being incredible horn-dog. Asked if he could think about anything else for God's sake for just a minute or two if possible, he replied that he could not. CT brain scan administered forty-eight hours after admittance showed that to be correct. Every cortex and all cognitive functions of patient's brain were occupied with images of J. Lo, and with one scene in particular from her movie "Maid in Manhattan," which he had recently watched on an airplane without the sound.

J. Lo herself was summoned to clinic and met with patient in observation booth on the grounds. She explained to patient that her movies and CD covers, and the short video of Ben Affleck rubbing suntan lotion on her, were intended for entertainment purposes only, and not as substitute for mature relationship with appropriate partner probably very different from her. Upon departure, she gave patient autographed full-length publicity still, which unfortunately caused him to fall into anaphylactic shock aggravated by drastic worsening of condition. Later brought back to consciousness with I.V. drip of adreno-eutopophane (120 cc.); returned to room.

During first trimester of aggressive medication and treatment, patient showed no change. Second trimester: also no change. Third trimester: slight improvement, later attributed to errors in data caused by faulty instrumentation. Fourth trimester: patient fitted with special clothing and encouraged to mingle in society. Condition unchanged.

On a personal note, it grieved doctors and staff to witness patient's continued disability and yet be unable to help this middle-aged individual, who was, after all, merely attempting to live life while achingly, bakingly inflamed. On good days, some slight improvement might be detected; but then Nurse Randi or Nurse Amber, fairly bursting from her starched nurse's whites, would walk by his room on a nursely errand, and progress would be lost.

In the end, regrettably, nothing could be done for this man. Even the most advanced medical science in the most technologically advanced country in the world has its limits. After eighteen months, patient's insurer refused to pay further costs, and dropped him from the rolls. Burdened with undeniable pre- and post-existing condition, patient was turned down for all other coverage. At present, he is talking on the phone once a week to a paramedic in Bengal who assures him that his disorder will inevitably slowly reverse itself as the body weakens with age. Patient is also promised that any number of illnesses he can reasonably anticipate contracting in the course of time are known to have deflationary and disinflammatory effects. Patient is happily expecting to be relieved at last when he crawls into a nice cold grave. ♦

ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD DEPT.

From the Hermann (Mo.) Advertiser-Courier.

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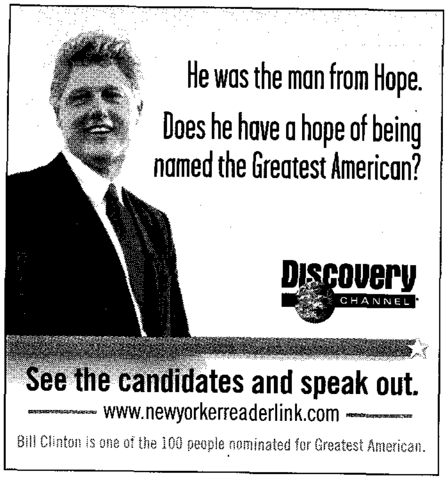
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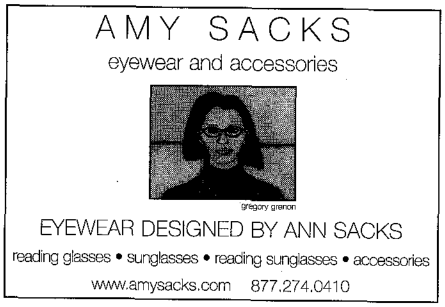
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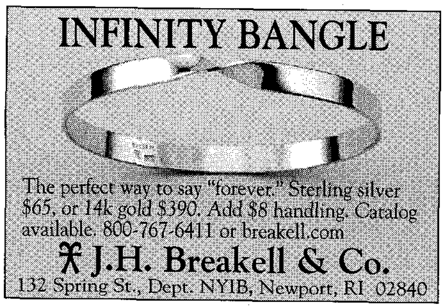
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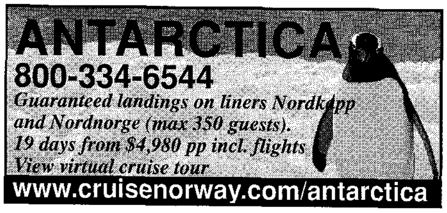
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A NEW BEGINNING

Why we should build apartments at Ground Zero.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

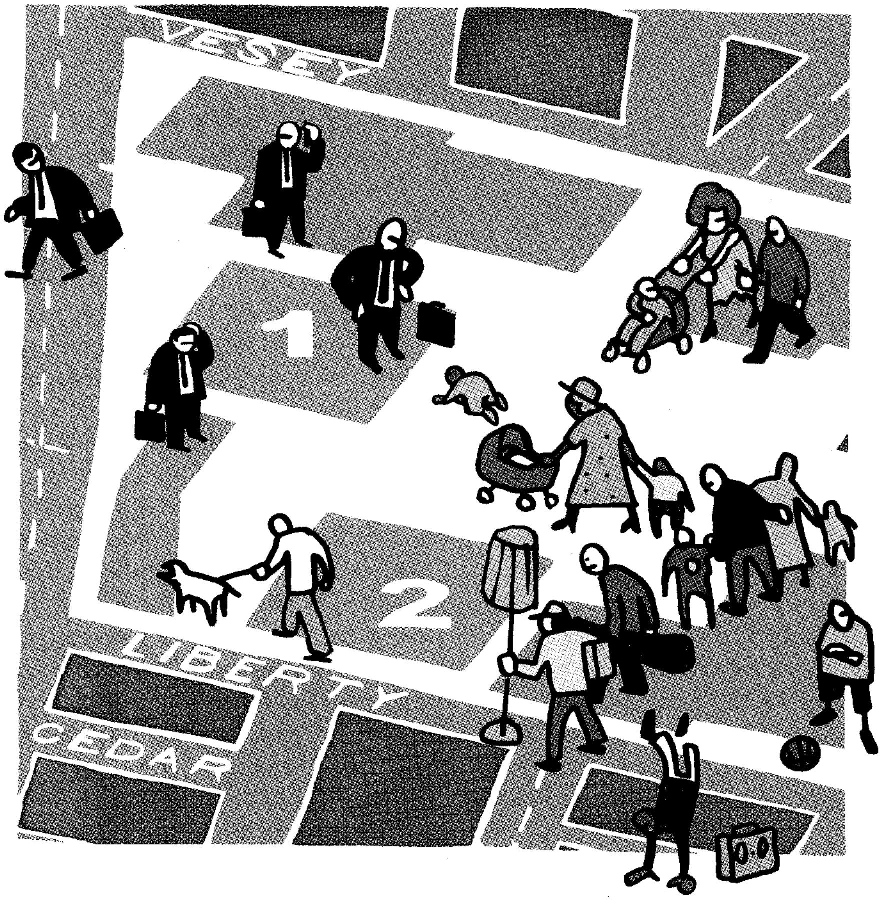
In the lives of cities, boldness and vision rarely follow catastrophe. Chicago rebuilt itself in sturdy but mundane fashion after its great fire, in 1871; it was thirty-eight years before Daniel Burnham created the sweeping master plan that gave the city much of its grandeur. After the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, the city set aside a plan to remake itself with grand boulevards and focussed instead on reconstructing as much as it could on its four square miles of burned ruins. Berlin tolerated the wasteland of Potsdamer Platz in its center for more than half a century, from the Second World War to the nineteen-nineties; the void at its heart was then filled with sleek but banal commercial buildings.

Still, it seemed reasonable to hope that things would be different at Ground Zero. In the anguished months after September 11th, when people eventually began thinking about what should happen to the sixteen acres that had been the site of the World Trade Center, they talked either of ambitious, utopian projects—international centers for peace, memorials in the form of great towers—or of leaving the entire site as an open public space dedicated to the people who died in the terrorist attack. There were calls to hand over a portion of the site to Frank Gehry's audacious design for a new Guggenheim Museum, which had been proposed for another location in lower Manhattan. Architects from Michael Graves to Paolo Soleri offered creative schemes for Ground Zero, and although many of the plans made little sense, they heightened the expectation that something extraordinary was likely to happen there—indeed, that something extraordinary *had* to happen, that vision and imagination were the only proper response to the tragedy.

Ground Zero, sadly, has become not a place of vision but, rather, the site of a planning and political catastrophe. In public, the planning process has been surrounded by lofty, often sanctimonious rhetoric; in private, the numerous officials and designers have squabbled ceaselessly over power and money. In the next few weeks, the planners will present a revised design for the project's centerpiece—the Freedom Tower, a seventy-story office building topped by a crown of latticed steel cables so enormous that it would have made the structure the tallest skyscraper in the world. The new design will undoubtedly look better than the present version, a clumsy hybrid of the work of two rivals: David Childs, known for his corporate skyscrapers, and Daniel Libeskind, the official master planner for Ground Zero, who is a creator of extravagant sculptural forms. Officially, the current design was derailed by security concerns. But Larry Silverstein, the tower's developer, had been struggling for months with the planners over whether he would pay for the latticed top, or for any other element that would make the tower more than an ordinary office building.

The Freedom Tower, with or without its fancy spire, is an unnecessary building. The planned skyscraper, which will contain 2.6 million square feet of commercial office space, doesn't have a single tenant—an unsurprising fact, since the demand for commercial office space in lower Manhattan is so small that it can barely be said to exist. The tower, it seems, is being built not to ennoble, enliven, or enrich the city but to satisfy the narrow, self-interested agendas of Silverstein, who leased the Twin Towers in 2001, and the Port Authority, which built the World Trade Center and still controls the land. Silverstein, for his part, is largely building with insurance money instead of borrowing, as developers usually do, and he figures that he will be well positioned in the unlikely event that the lower-Manhattan office market rebounds. Meanwhile, the Port Authority receives ten million dollars a month in rent that Silverstein still pays, under the terms of his lease.

Governor George Pataki, who has overseen the rebuilding effort, bears the greatest responsibility for the failure of imagination at Ground Zero. Though he has spoken frequently about wanting to have an open and public planning process, his most important decision about the site was made in private. Not long after September 11th, he agreed to let Silverstein and the Port Authority continue to treat Ground Zero as a platform for ten and a half million square feet of commercial office space. In the emotional atmosphere that followed September 11th, it would have been easy politically for Pataki to have said he wanted to use some of the billions of dollars in insurance proceeds to buy the land back from the Port Authority and end Silverstein's lease. But Pataki, perhaps thinking that it was in his political interest to get something built as soon as possible, was unwilling to oppose these entrenched forces.



Lower Manhattan is coming to seem as domestic as Carnegie Hill.

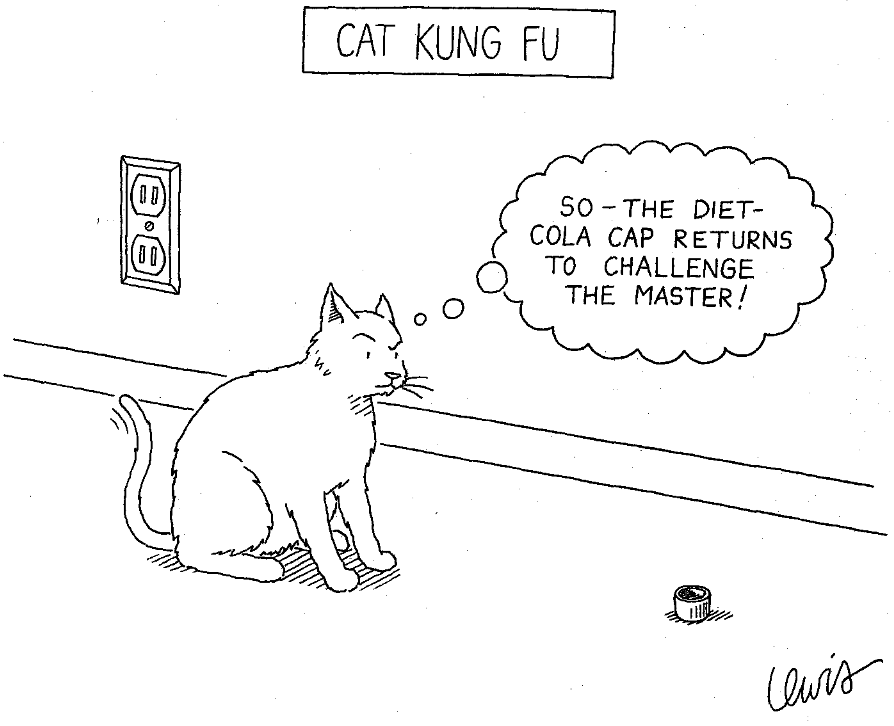
JEROEN KOOLHAAS

Pataki tried to cloak expediency in the garb of majesty, but he hasn't been able to carry off either one. The planning process has been presented as an effort to transform the site into a symbol of grace and renewal; in reality, the planners have been fixated on figuring out a way to cram a huge amount of office space into a small site. In addition to the Freedom Tower, the master plan calls for four additional office towers—even though there are no prospective tenants for them, either. Less than half of the site has been set aside for a memorial and cultural buildings, not enough to make public space seem central to the project. With the focus on generating profit, it is increasingly hard to see what makes Ground Zero different from any other real-estate project in New York, except for its size and, of course, for the way in which its land became available.

Since there has never been a true public dialogue about what Ground Zero ought to be used for, it's impossible to say what New Yorkers would prefer to see built there, but it's clear that the answer isn't a crowded cluster of office towers. (Donald Trump last week advocated building replicas of the Twin Towers one story higher than the originals, but the idea of spending billions to repeat one of the major architectural mistakes of the twentieth century is even worse than the current plan.) Ground Zero doesn't need simply to be rebuilt; it needs to be reimagined as a new district of the city, one that is both inspiring and useful. And what lower Manhattan needs now, more than anything, is housing.

In the traumatic period after the Twin Towers collapsed, most people found the notion of living at Ground Zero to be upsetting, even ghoulish. Many apartments at Battery Park City were abandoned after September 11th, and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the agency in charge of revitalizing downtown, had to offer subsidies to persuade new tenants to occupy them.

This aversion to living in lower Manhattan was surprisingly short-lived. There are now more residents in the area than ever before. As it turns out, September 11th only briefly interrupted a long-term trend. Manhattan has suffered from an apartment shortage for more than a decade, and people who once wouldn't have considered living below Fourteenth Street have begun exploring options on the island's southern tip. When the World Trade Center was built, in the nineteen-seventies, almost nobody lived in lower Manhattan, but when the Twin Towers fell, there were more than fifteen thousand people living in their shadow. In the past few years, dozens of old office buildings have been transformed into apartments, bringing thousands of additional residents to lower Manhattan, and the pace of conversions has made many of the area's slender prewar towers much more valuable as apartments than as offices. Even a building overlooking Ground Zero—an ornate, mansard-roofed 1907 office tower by the architect Cass Gilbert, which was badly damaged on September 11th—is being converted into a luxury-apartment complex. New condominiums have, in turn, inspired the creation of restaurants, stores, gyms, and day-care centers. Wall Street now has nearly as many residential buildings as office buildings, and Whole Foods recently signed a lease to build a supermarket on Greenwich Street. An area


CAT KUNG FU
SO—THE DIET-COLA CAP RETURNS TO CHALLENGE THE MASTER!

that once contained a scattering of isolated homesteaders is coming to seem as domestic as Carnegie Hill.

There is still time to create an intelligent plan for Ground Zero, although it is going to be harder politically, and more expensive, than it would have been if Pataki had wrested control of the site from Silverstein and the Port Authority. Fortunately, we have one advantage that we did not have then, which is that we are beyond the time when we looked at the skyline of lower Manhattan and felt a sense of shock at the absence of the Twin Towers. We can now comfortably make long-term decisions about the site.

In an ideal plan, most of Ground Zero would be devoted to housing, hotels, and retail space. Lower Manhattan currently has a range of housing options: the converted lofts of Tribeca, the converted office buildings of Wall Street, and the retro-style apartment complexes of Battery Park City. The one thing missing is experimental architecture. Ground Zero would be the perfect place for an inventive alternative to the prim, packaged urbanism of Battery Park City. Here is a chance to rewrite the city—to produce "green" buildings that generate their own energy or have walls made from recycled materials. Architects have developed a new generation of prefabricated modern houses, and Ground Zero could be the place to expand these sleek glass-and-metal boxes to monumental urban scale. Another possibility is to create modular lofts that could be easily adapted to the needs of a succession of tenants, or to integrate large gardens into high-rise living. With several blocks to build on, Ground Zero provides an opportunity to think not in terms of single buildings that are stand-alone works of sculpture but of ensembles that fit together to make coherent streetscapes and complete neighborhoods—something modern architecture has rarely succeeded in doing, in New York or anywhere else.

Daring residential design is finally beginning to appear all over Manhattan. There is, for example, a spectacular glass condominium by Winka Dubbeldam a dozen blocks north of Ground Zero, on Greenwich Street; Richard Meier's exquisite glass apartment towers, in the West Village along the Hudson River, may be New York's most coveted new address. A housing market that was once defined largely by white brick is more amenable to new architecture than it has ever been. We are at a point in time when strong architecture carries minimal risk.

What does seem risky is building office space. Not only does Larry Silverstein have to find tenants for the Freedom Tower, if he builds it, but he also has to fill another building, across the street from Ground Zero, which he has already constructed: a seven-hundred-million-dollar glass tower built as a replacement for Seven World Trade Center. That building, designed by David Childs, will be ready for occupancy next year. Predictably, it has no tenants.

These days, many planners and public officials try to justify building office towers at Ground Zero with words like "balance." They argue that the demand for housing in lower Manhattan has become so great that the area is at risk of losing its identity as a strong commercial center. This view seems excessively dire: Wall Street is hardly fading into oblivion. Moreover, it seems foolhardy to interfere with the larger shifts in the evolution of lower Manhattan, especially when those trends are so healthy.

Lower Manhattan hasn't been a truly diverse neighborhood since the nineteenth century, when the city's center of gravity began creeping uptown and office towers started surrounding Trinity Church, crowding out residential life. Now that the cycle has reversed, the planning for Ground Zero seems frozen in the past. Surely, it would be better to knit its sixteen acres into the vibrant new fabric of downtown.

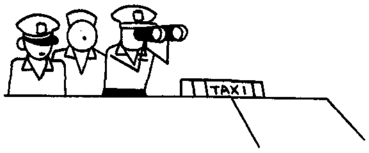
The only element of the current plan that is worth salvaging is the need for a potent memorial. A memorial has to be not only the physical center of those sixteen acres but also the soul of the project. Daniel Libeskind, in his master plan for Ground Zero, adopted in 2003, had the brilliant notion of leaving a large section of the excavated site below ground level and incorporating a concrete retaining wall that survived the fall of the Twin Towers. This sunken space would break up the normal urban experience, creating a disquieting disruption in city life. But when a competition was held to design an actual memorial, the winners, Michael Arad and Peter Walker, produced a scheme that raised most of the memorial area back to street level. Libeskind, whose ideas for the site have been slowly undermined by Silverstein and others, was right in this case. Although the Arad and Walker plan is refined and intelligent, the danger is that the memorial will feel like an elegant park lost amid office towers.

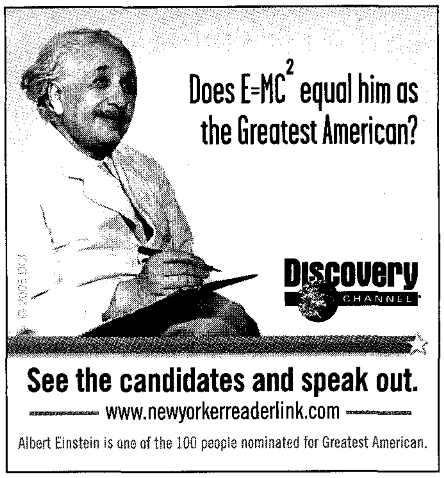
In its current form, the memorial also feels squeezed by one of the two cultural buildings planned for the site: a wood-and-glass structure designed by the Norwegian firm Snohetta, which will contain both the Drawing Center, a small museum, and the International Freedom Center, a new institution with the ambitious, if hazy, mandate of "helping people understand, appreciate and advance freedom as a world historical movement." The design, which consists of a large, boxy structure made of wood set with thousands of small glass prisms, is among the most innovative pieces of architecture so far proposed for Ground Zero—a shimmering object, neither opaque nor transparent. Unfortunately, it hovers on the edge of the memorial site and, as a result, may dwarf it. And if the master plan is realized, both the Snohetta building and a performing-arts center across the street, which is being designed by Frank Gehry, will cower directly beneath huge office buildings. The Gehry building, for its part, faces an uncertain future, owing to funding problems, and its design remains incomplete. A replanned Ground Zero would put the public realm first and the private realm second.

Moreover, most of the cultural institutions involved are marginal. Ground Zero doesn't need expensive cultural buildings for small outfits that can't afford them. One of the many mysteries of the planning process is why strong cultural groups that wanted to come to Ground Zero, such as the New York City Opera and the New York Hall of Science, were turned away in favor of less well known organizations, such as the Joyce International Dance Center and the Signature Theatre Company. Why wasn't space at Ground Zero given to City Opera? The planners adopted the misguided notion that smaller, populist groups were needed, when pride of place should have been given to major institutions that could make Ground Zero a cultural magnet. Perhaps City Opera was turned down because an opera house would have cut into some of Silverstein's lobby space in the Freedom Tower. An essential aspect of a revised plan for Ground Zero would be a much larger allotment for cultural buildings—enough land for an opera house, for example.

Ground Zero must also make an impression on the skyline. The Freedom Tower, for all its faults, would have soared higher than any other structure in New York. Yet an office tower is not the only tall structure imaginable. A great tower can also be a broadcast tower or a cloud-piercing observation tower. It could be a memorial in itself, or a part of a memorial, and if we called it the Memorial Tower it would be a feature of the skyline that recognized the lives that were lost within the skyline. The tower would be, in effect, a twenty-first-century Eiffel Tower for New York, which would use the technology of our time as aggressively and inventively as Eiffel exploited the technology of the nineteenth century. It would be a perfect commission for Santiago Calatrava, the Spanish architect-engineer whom the Port Authority commissioned to design the new transportation center for downtown—a lyrical structure that resembles a vast, swooping tent of ribbed metal and glass. It's the one building proposed for Ground Zero, so far, that almost everyone seems to love.

A great tower by Calatrava or another architect equally adept at turning engineering into poetic form would give New York the defiantly proud icon it has craved since the towers fell. And it wouldn't require anybody to live or work a hundred stories above the street. Most important, it would be a way of transcending the false divide between commemoration and renewal. A soaring tower can be made to coexist with apartments and museums. The planners at Ground Zero have treated the sacred and the everyday as two distinct spheres. The answer isn't to split the site into a memorial sector and a business sector but, rather, to find ways to honor the dead while rejuvenating the city, to acknowledge the past while looking toward the future. Ground Zero is the first great urban-design challenge of the twenty-first century, and the noblest way to honor what happened here is to rebuild the site with the complexity and vitality that characterizes the best of Manhattan. ♦

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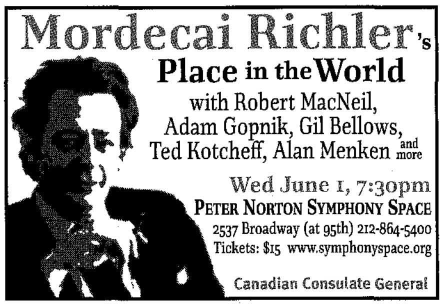
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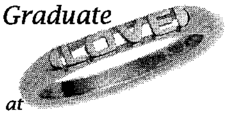
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PROFILES

McCAIN'S PARTY

Why the senator from Arizona believes he can be the next Republican nominee for President.

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Watched closely by a North Vietnamese guard, a dirty, feeble-looking young man on crutches, carrying a slop bucket, inched forward in slow, painful steps, and then, with a huge effort, hoisted the bucket, emptying it into an open, fetid trough. As cameras whirred, the white-haired John McCain, standing a few feet away, regarded this portrayal of his younger self intently. The Arizona senator had come to New Orleans to visit the set of a movie based on his 1999 book, "Faith of My Fathers"—an account of growing up with a father and grandfather who were both famous four-star admirals, and also of his experience as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. It will be shown on the A&E network on Memorial Day, with Shawn Hatosy starring. McCain remarked that the set, based that day in a dilapidated former brewery, looked a lot like the "Hanoi Hilton," where he spent most of his captivity: the interrogation room with long ropes hanging from the ceiling; the wretched infirmary cubicle; and the model hospital space, which the North Vietnamese displayed to visitors. "I spent about one and a half hours there," McCain, who was a prisoner for five and a half years, commented dryly.

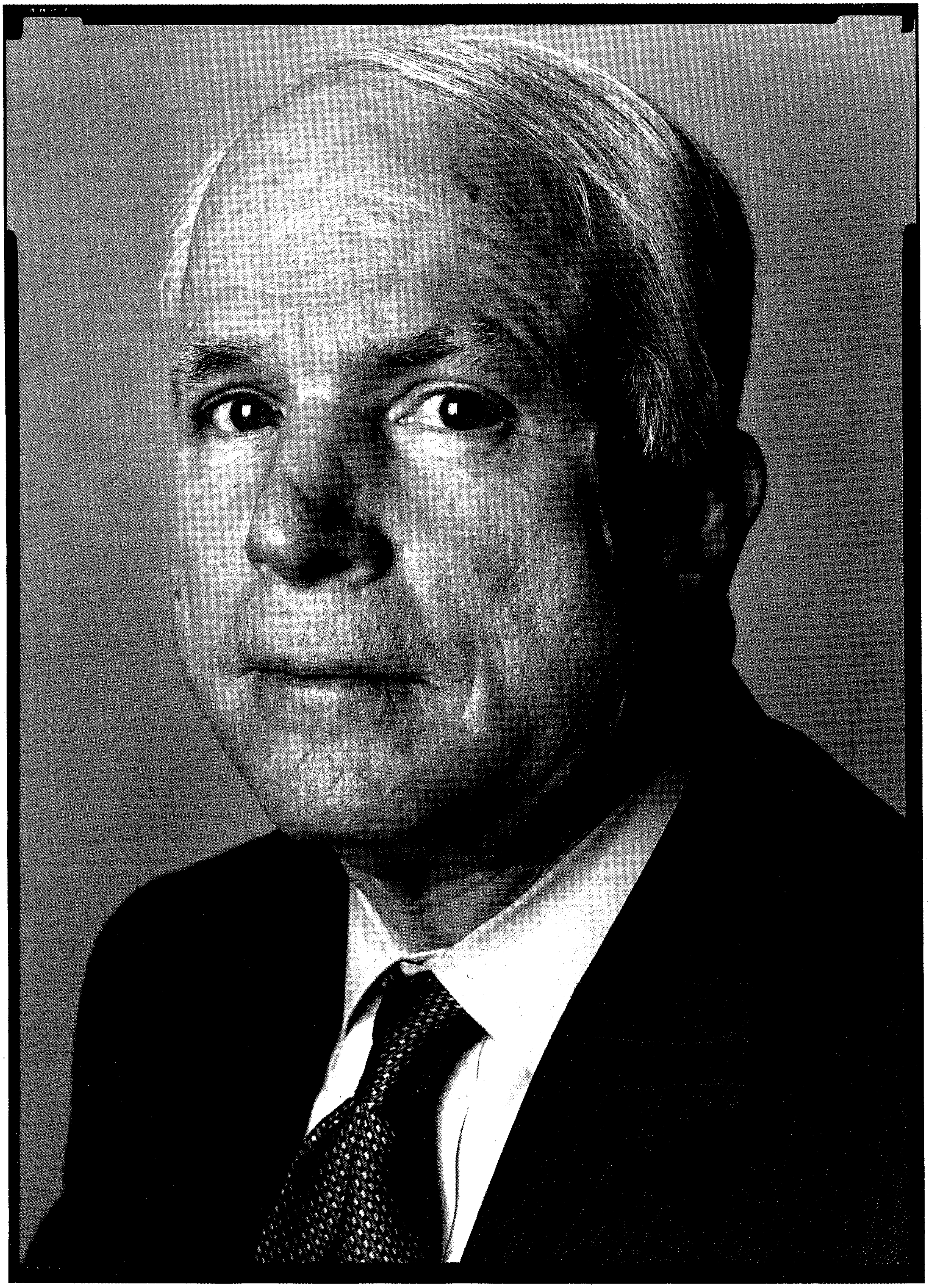
As he made his way around the set, members of the cast and the crew surrounded him, asking him to sign copies of his book. A young Vietnamese actor wearing a North Vietnamese military uniform told McCain that he was one of twelve children and that his family had come to America when the war ended. At first, they lived in a three-bedroom apartment with a single bathroom, but they had saved money, and bought one house and then another, and today his family owns seventeen houses. "What a story!" McCain exclaimed; moments later, he was repeating it, word for word, to his longtime chief of staff, Mark Salter, who wrote "Faith of My Fathers" with him. A young woman asked McCain to sign a book for her father. "He said to tell you that he really hopes you're going to be the next President," she said. "Tell him I said thank you," McCain replied warmly, and wrote a lengthy inscription.

Accompanying McCain on this visit was Colonel George (Bud) Day, a leader of the P.O.W.s at the Hanoi Hilton and one of the men whom McCain credits with having saved his life. Day and a cellmate took care of McCain after he was put in their cell. Day was also prominently featured in ads prepared by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which attacked Senator John Kerry's Vietnam service last year. In one commercial, Day addressed himself to Kerry, asking, "How can you expect our sons and daughters to follow you when you condemned their fathers and grandfathers?" When McCain defended Kerry and denounced the ads, Day was upset with his old comrade. "Something that made Bud such an ideal leader in prison was his tunnel vision," McCain told me later. "That makes him behave on the outside—well . . . " He trailed off, chuckling. "But in prison there were guys who would listen to the Vietnamese propaganda, they'd begin doubting their country. Not Bud! He's straight tunnel vision, screw 'em! He didn't join in philosophical discussions about whether the war, you know, was justified—and that's what you want in a leader in that environment. Whereas the other guys, we used to call them the political scientists, would sit around and discuss, 'Well, the Geneva agreements, you know—' But the time to debate and discuss all that was before you got shot down. Once you're in prison, then you're expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct." It stipulated that prisoners were not to disclose any significant information to their captors, and were to agree to be released only in order of capture. Day refused to listen to the North Vietnamese propaganda radio show featuring Hanoi Hannah, but McCain enjoyed it. As though reminiscing about some picaresque adventure, McCain continued, "I used to love to listen to Hanoi Hannah. Every once in a while, they'd play a decent song. Somebody left a bunch of old Louis Armstrong records in Hanoi for some reason, and if they played those it was great."

While visiting the set, McCain filmed an interview, to be used to publicize the movie. The makeup that is applied for his TV appearances softens the long scar that runs down one side of his face, from surgery he underwent nearly five years ago for melanoma, a virulent form of skin cancer. Dressed in jeans, boots, and a brown leather jacket, McCain, who is sixty-eight, looked like a much older but still jaunty version of the dashing aviator he once was. As a young man, he said, he had thought that all glory was self-glory, and that he was so strong he could achieve whatever he wanted; but he learned in prison that he was dependent on others. There he was the recipient of a thousand acts of courage and compassion and love, even as other prisoners—including Bud Day—"had it far, far worse than I ever did." And, yes, because his father was commander-in-chief of the Pacific, the Vietnamese saw him as a valuable propaganda asset (referring to him as "the crown prince") and offered him early release—something that he turned down repeatedly.

The A&E interviewer asked what relevance his story had to the present moment. "We're in a war on terror," McCain responded readily. "We have young Americans who are fighting and dying as we speak, and I would hope that, by seeing the film, maybe they might be a little bit encouraged, and recognize that what they are involved in is a very noble cause."

I asked McCain later whether he feels that he is especially well suited to lead in these times. "I do believe that I

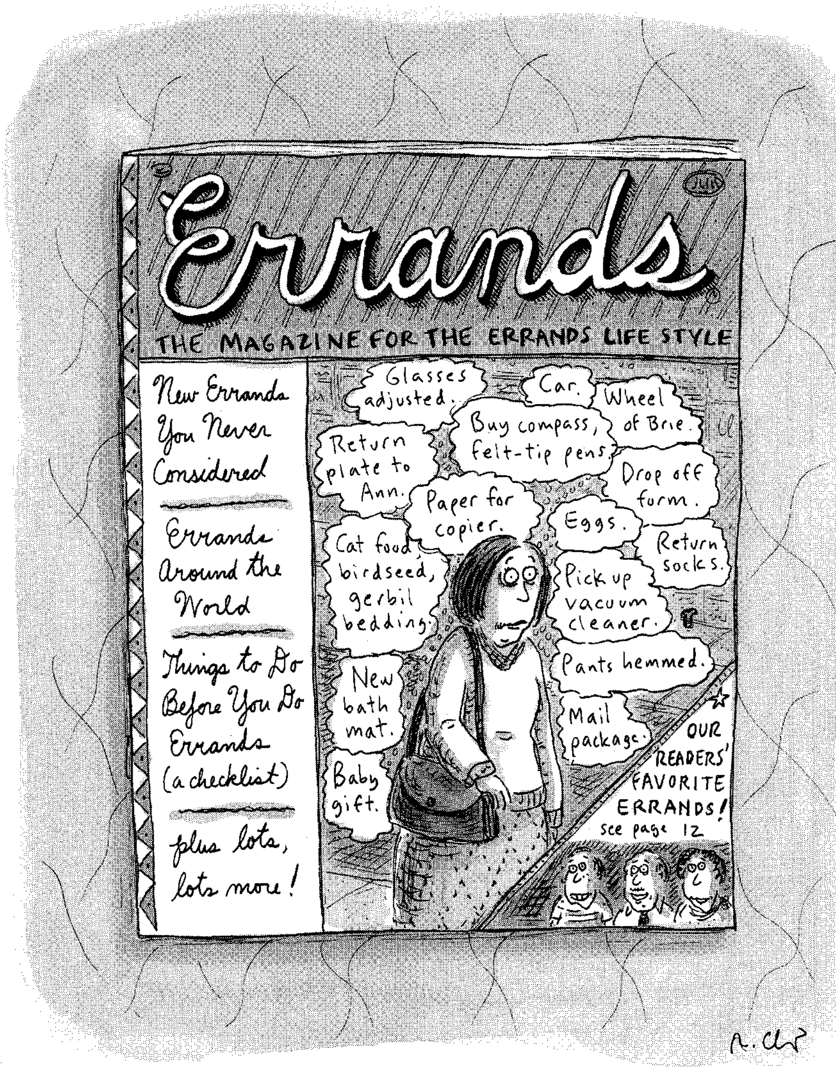


"Americans don't like sore losers," John McCain said recently. "They want you to move on." Photograph by Steve Pyke.

have the qualifications to address what is now the transcendent issue of our time," he said. He pointed out that his highest priorities have always been national security, armed forces, preparedness—"all of those issues that in earlier times may not have been so important, particularly all through the nineties, when we basically thought that, since the Cold War was over, we were just at peace." His qualities and experience would be most pertinent, he said, "as long as we face the threat that we do, which I think is going to be for quite a long time."

Whenever McCain is asked if he is running for President, he responds that it is too early to decide. But it appears to be the organizing principle of his life these days, evident in his assertion of his leadership capabilities, his positioning of himself, his relationship to President Bush, even his casual asides. Many of McCain's friends comment that he is far more serious and focussed than he has ever been, and that they rarely see the McCain they knew—irrepressible, occasionally outrageous, impolitic.

But that character is not altogether obsolete. The moment the car stopped at McCain's hotel in downtown New Orleans, he set out at his usual fast clip for Harrah's, across the street. McCain is an avid gambler. Wes Gullett, a close friend who worked for McCain for years, told me that they used to play craps in Las Vegas in fourteen-hour stints, standing at the tables from 10 A.M. to midnight. "Craps is addictive," McCain remarked, and he headed for the fifteen-dollar-minimum-bet tables. At the most obvious level, the game is incredibly simple—players rotate turns throwing the dice, and you either win or lose depending on what number comes up. But McCain's betting formula makes it much more complicated. "Uh-oh!" he cried, as a player accidentally threw the dice off the table. "This is a very, very superstitious game," he said. When his turn came to throw the dice, he picked them up and blew on them first. He had placed chips on the number 5, so (envisioning a combination of 2 and 3) he called, "Michael Jordan! Michael Jordan!" A few minutes before, McCain had tried to move closer to the table and another player refused to make room. Now, suddenly, the man swung around, peered at McCain, and exclaimed, "I just realized who you are! Here, take my place." When McCain demurred, the man went on, "No, you've gotta take it! I admire you so much! I wish you all the luck next time!" As he walked off into the crowd, he muttered, "I just wish you'd run the last time, instead of that other guy."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OUR READERS' FAVORITE ERRANDS! see page 12

McCain's near-win in his contest with "that other guy" in the 2000 Republican Presidential primaries was the bright dividing line of his life. He entered the field as someone who "had six-per-cent name I.D. and was No. 11 out of eleven guys," his former campaign manager, Rick Davis, said—and he emerged a commanding political figure. Today, he appears to be the most popular politician in the country. It was not the first time that McCain had transformed a painful loss into something that augmented his stature and influence. One of his favorite maxims is "When you go through it, either it kills you or you come out stronger."

McCain's resilience was particularly conspicuous when he returned from captivity in Vietnam, in 1973. Admiral Chuck Larson, who met McCain when they were freshmen at the Naval Academy, in 1954, recalled that McCain then was the rebel, with grades that placed him at the bottom of his class, and Larson the high-achieving brigade commander and student-body president. "John used to introduce me and say, 'The two of us together are in the middle of the class,' " Larson said. "John was independent. He got tired of people reminding him of his father and grandfather, and saying, You're not measuring up." In flight school, in Pensacola, Florida, they roomed together. "Like his mother, he was prematurely gray," Larson said. "So at twenty-two he had salt-and-pepper hair—he could attract women from age eighteen to fifty." Larson spent many weekends and summers at the

McCain home, in Washington, D.C. "John's mother was just a live wire, very social, and his father was a more private, introspective person," he told me. "He talked very directly to sailors, who loved him, but when he was at home he was quiet." Larson smiled. "He always called me 'Godammit Chuck Boy.' "

In 1969, more than a year after John was shot down, in a bombing mission over Hanoi in October, 1967, Larson met with Admiral McCain at CINCPAC headquarters, in Honolulu. He was there as a naval aide to President Richard Nixon, who was to receive a briefing from McCain, and the Admiral summoned Larson. "He sent everyone out of the room, and sat down and told me what they knew about John, from all the intelligence reports they had. Tears welled over the edges of his eyes—he was such a tough old guy. When he was done telling me everything, he bit on a cigar. Didn't light it, just bit down. Then he buzzed, and when the officer came in he said, 'This is Lieutenant Commander Larson, give him whatever he needs, or there will be hell to pay.' And after the officer left he said, 'Godammit Chuck Boy, that's why I like this job—you buzz, they jump!' "

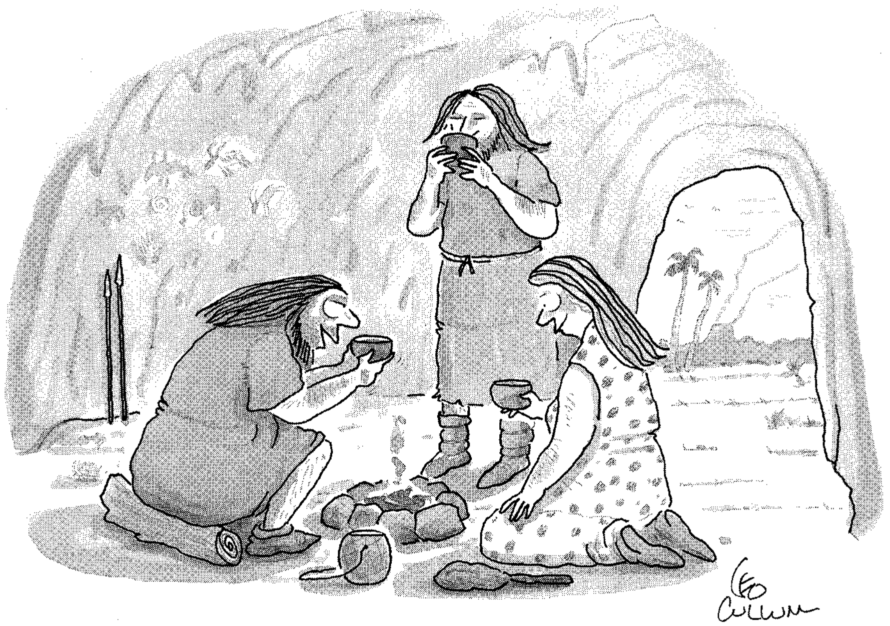
Larson saw McCain shortly after he was released, in March, 1973, at a party that Ross Perot threw for the P.O.W.s in a hotel in San Francisco. "He was much like his old self. When we first got together, he'd tell random stories, but they were all the funny ones. John did not want to be a professional P.O.W. That night, at the party, everybody started telling stories about their incarceration. Not John. One guy had been shot down six weeks before their release—when the Vietnamese were cleaning and fattening them up. Then he saw John, and he said, 'I shouldn't be going on this way, I was there for six weeks and you were there for five and a half years.' And John said, 'Oh, no—go right ahead. The first six weeks were the toughest!' "

After divorcing his first wife, Carol, who had waited for him through the years of his captivity, in 1980, McCain married Cindy Hensley, eighteen years his junior, and the only daughter of a wealthy beer distributor. He eventually moved to Arizona, where Cindy's parents lived, and became involved in Republican politics. In 1982, he won a House seat and, four years later, Barry Goldwater's Senate seat. It was a rapid, sure-footed climb, but a few months after entering the Senate McCain stumbled. He attended two meetings with savings-and-loan regulators on behalf of Charles Keating, Jr., a tycoon who was a major supporter (and who came to personify the collapse of the S. & L. industry, and went to prison). These meetings triggered Senate investigations, hearings, and deliberations that dragged on for nearly four years. Of five senators investigated, McCain was the only Republican; although it was clear that he was less culpable than most of the others, Democrats on the ethics committee refused to exonerate him unless the Democrats were exonerated as well. In the end, McCain and Senator John Glenn received the lightest censures. McCain has often remarked that the "public humiliation" of the Keating Five investigation was harder to endure than his incarceration. From the ordeal, though, he took lessons that came to define him as a very different kind of politician.

He learned to use the press, in a way that was mutually beneficial. Gullett said, "John's theory was 'I'm going to talk it to death. I don't have anything to hide—I might have made a mistake, but this is what I thought. So I'll answer every question.' That's him: Straight Talk Express! Let the press on the bus!" McCain developed an intense aversion to partisanship. He believed that he had been held hostage by the Democrats, and that his own party had not demanded his release. After that, he determined that he would take on fights over issues without regard to whether his opponents were Democrats or Republicans. And he decided that he would not merely apologize for his error in having sought to wield his influence on behalf of a generous contributor; he would also try to remake the system that encouraged such transgressions. He began to agitate for campaign-finance reform and to attack the appropriations process and its weakness for "pork," or pet projects for legislators' home districts. Some viewed this as a cynical attempt to trade in a soiled suit of clothing for a knight's armor. Whatever his initial motivation, McCain has been fighting for campaign-finance and pork reform for more than a decade.

Most Presidential contenders are drained by the demands of national campaigning, but during the 2000 race McCain flourished. Ordinary life never seems to afford him sufficient action or stimuli. To his staff people, his favorite opener is "What's goin' on?" "I pick up the phone on Christmas Eve—'What's goin' on?' " McCain's political adviser, John Weaver, said, mimicking his boss. " 'Nothing, John. People are with their friends and family. What's wrong with you?' " There was also a lighter side, though less publicly visible. "He is really superstitious, so each time something good happened we'd acquire these lucky things," Weaver said. "A lucky rabbit's foot. A lucky pen. A lucky feather. Two lucky rocks. A lucky football. We always had to have them around—I spent a lot of time looking for them, once we got them. At night, when he unloaded his pockets, he looked like a twelve-year-old Eagle Scout—all these rocks and feathers." McCain seems most comfortable when he is doing many things at once, and he found the perpetual motion of the campaign—and being the center of attention—uniquely satisfying. He appeared at a hundred and fourteen town-hall meetings during his campaign, sometimes four or five in a day. ("I love doing it—there's nothing I'd rather do," he told me, and seemed to mean it.) He refused Secret Service protection, plunging happily into the crowds.

McCain beat George W. Bush in New Hampshire, in a nineteen-point upset, but the storybook campaign ended when the Bush machine retaliated, in the infamous South Carolina primary. McCain had hoped that South Carolina's large veteran population would help him win there; but the Christian Coalition, deeply entrenched in the state, became the decisive constituency. Somewhat surprisingly, McCain had the support of Gary Bauer, the social conservative, who had dropped out of the race by that time. "I wanted a commitment from either George Bush or John McCain that if elected he would appoint pro-life judges to the Supreme Court," Bauer told me. "Bush said he had no litmus test, and his judges would be strict con-



"I'm getting woolly-mammoth notes."

• •

structionists. But McCain, in private, assured me he would appoint pro-life judges." Bauer's support, however, was no match for the efforts of Pat Robertson—a fiery opponent of McCain's efforts on behalf of campaign-finance reform, who, along with Ralph Reed, rallied the Christian right to Bush. E-mails, flyers, faxes, postcards, and phone calls inundated voters with information; many of the calls were made through push-polls, where the caller's aim is not to collect information so much as to spread it, and where the financial backing is difficult to uncover. There were allegations that McCain had fathered a black child (he and Cindy have an adopted daughter, Bridget, who is Bangladeshi); that McCain had committed treason in Hanoi, or was crazed from his captivity. This subterranean campaign was supplemented separately by attack ads and direct mail paid for by the National Right to Life Committee, the National Rifle Association, Americans for Tax Reform, and others. "What happened in South Carolina is as bad as you've been told and worse," Senator Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, who supported McCain in 2000 and witnessed the smear campaign, told me. "Most of it was about campaign-finance reform and special-interest groups—they were going to kill him before he got any stronger. It was sheer rumor demagoguery."

It was in South Carolina, too, that McCain made the biggest mistake of his campaign. In January, 2000, while he and Bush were fighting for New Hampshire's primary voters, South Carolinians had become enmeshed in a debate about whether the Confederate flag should be flown from the state capitol. Bush avoided taking a position by saying that it should be decided by the people of South Carolina. Two days later, on CBS's "Face the Nation," McCain was asked what the Confederate flag meant to him. He said that the flag was offensive "in many, many ways," and added, "As we all know, it's a symbol of racism and slavery." Chuck Larson, who was campaigning for his old friend, told me that when McCain stopped in Washington after that interview he met him in the private area of the airport; John Weaver was there, too, and McCain asked Weaver how he thought the interview had gone. Larson recalled, "Weaver said, 'Terrible! You said the rebel flag is a symbol of racism and slavery!' John said, 'It is!' 'Well, it's your race to lose!' Weaver said, and stormed off. John let him go, and then he said, 'It's really hard, not to say what you feel.' "

The next day, when McCain was asked by a reporter about the flag, he pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and read, "As to how I view the flag, I understand both sides. Some view it as a symbol of slavery. Others view it as a symbol of heritage. Personally, I see the battle flag as a symbol of heritage." Weaver, who had helped draft the statement, said that McCain "read it as though he were in the Hanoi Hilton, being given something to read by his captors. It was the only time we consultants got in the way of John's instincts—and it was the wrong thing to do."

McCain went on to win primaries in Michigan and Arizona, but after South Carolina he lost the momentum he needed to raise enough money to compete, and the day after Super Tuesday he withdrew. (A few weeks later, he returned to South Carolina, and apologized for having sacrificed principle to his ambition by retracting his initial remarks about the flag.) It was the first electoral contest McCain had ever lost. And, for someone so competitive that he didn't speak to his best friend in prison for days after losing to him in a bridge game, this defeat was particularly hard. But one of his political heroes, Theodore Roosevelt, who was defeated by Woodrow Wilson in 1912, offered a cautionary lesson. "Roosevelt was very bitter at the end of his life," McCain told me. "And I took a lesson from that—that I would not be bitter.

"Americans don't like sore losers!" McCain added with some heat. "They want you to move on. And that's what I did. I didn't complain, didn't express outrage. I moved on."

Not being a sore loser, in this instance, seems to have meant agreeing to support Bush in the 2000 campaign. They met in Pittsburgh—alone in a hotel room for ninety minutes—and emerged with a show of considerable civility. But it was mainly show. Sharon and Oliver Harper are close friends of the McCains; the two couples own many acres of adjacent property in Oak Creek, Arizona, and their children have grown up together. The Harpers travelled with the McCains on the campaign. Sharon Harper recalled that she and her husband were vacationing on Arizona's Lake Powell in August, when they received an urgent call. George and Laura Bush were to visit the McCains at Oak Creek, in an attempt to improve relations. "John and Cindy said, 'Can you come back? We don't want to be left alone with them, this is going to be really difficult.' So we came back." Harper has a photograph of the three couples at Oak Creek, smiling gamely at the camera. McCain did campaign for Bush in the 2000 election, "but through gritted teeth," Harper says.

At the Republican Convention in Philadelphia, Weaver recalled, he received a call from a member of Bush's staff, who said, "Would you guys please leave the Convention? You're getting too much attention."

" 'Fine,' I said. Rick Davis and I went to New York to go to Le Cirque and get drunk. But John decided to go to Bethesda, to get this thing on his face checked—only because he had the time. The next week, he called—it was malignant. If he had waited another month or two—and he would have, if he'd been running—it would have been lights out." McCain was given a diagnosis of melanoma, for which he had first been treated in 1993.

"The cancer put him in a hurry, and made his zest for life even more robust," Weaver said. McCain realized, too, that he could leverage the power of the national constituency he had established to expand his influence in the Senate, where Democrats would be more willing to work with him, and he would probably be able to get more legislation passed than he ever had before. And the more he was able to use the Senate as a bully pulpit the larger his national constituency would grow.

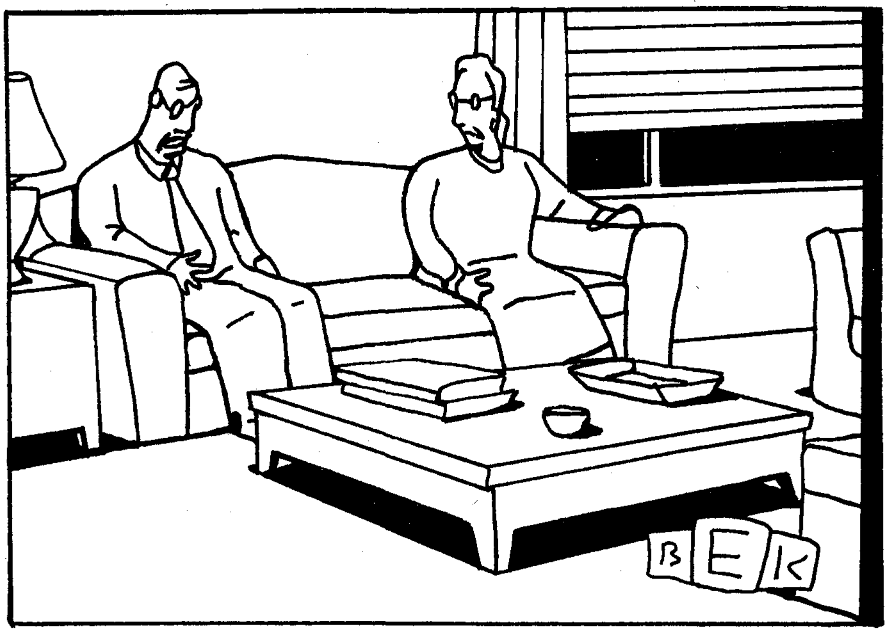
After 2000, McCain's distaste for intense partisanship increased even more. In many of the town-hall meetings during the campaign, when McCain had been asked about global warming, he had said that he didn't know enough to take a position but promised that he would look into it. As chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, he held numerous hearings on global warming; he became an impassioned believer, and has co-sponsored legislation with Senator Joseph Lieberman to curb greenhouse-gas emissions. In the town-hall meetings, he also heard many stories about people who had been denied health care by their H.M.O.s and had suffered terribly as a result. In 2001, with Senators Edward Kennedy and John Edwards, McCain sponsored the Patients' Bill of Rights, which was intended to regulate the managed-care industry.

McCain's greatest challenge to his own party was his determination to pass campaign-finance-reform legislation. After an ultimately successful effort to get the bill passed in the Senate, McCain infuriated the Republican leadership in the bitterly partisan House by pushing it aggressively there. He even made calls to House members from an office off the House floor—an act viewed as treason by many Republicans. McCain broke ranks with the Bush Administration on other major issues—repeatedly voting against Bush's tax cuts and against the proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, calling on Bush to ease restrictions on embryonic stem-cell research, and criticizing Bush for his handling of postwar Iraq. What might have been tolerated, and even respected, as independent-mindedness by previous generations of Republicans has come to seem heretical in today's ideological and highly disciplined congressional ranks.

But McCain has never confused his colleagues with his constituents; it is his constituents whose approval he most prizes, and he defines them broadly, as a group that extends far beyond the confines of Arizona. It had always been a truism that politicians who lose in Presidential primaries return to Congress as losers, but McCain, as he noted, "came out enhanced, rather than diminished."

The McCain alchemy derives, in large measure, from a widespread popular perception that he says what he believes. "Ten times today, I've had people come up, saying, 'I don't agree with you sometimes, but I really support you because I think you stand up for what you believe,' " McCain often remarks. "I cherish that reputation." In 2004, however, the reputation came into question when McCain, after rejecting John Kerry's offer of an expanded Vice-Presidency, transformed himself almost overnight from the President's most severe Republican critic to his most valuable defender.

Kerry's offer to McCain was a reflection, among other things, of how much McCain was thought to despise Bush for what had been done to him in South Carolina. Kerry was betting that even if McCain did not accept his offer he would not campaign aggressively for Bush. "It was a high-risk strategy," Bob Kerrey, the former Nebraska senator, said. "I think it ended up hurting Kerry—because the Republicans were able to say, Here's the person you wanted as your Vice-President, and he is embracing the President." But he didn't fault Kerry for trying, he added, because the upside was so great. "I don't think there's any way



"I suppose we could burst onto the literary scene."

the President could have beaten them." (A CBS News poll released last June found that a Kerry-McCain ticket had a fourteen-percentage-point lead over Bush-Cheney, whereas most head-to-head polls showed Kerry leading only slightly.)

Kerry had apparently been thinking of McCain as a possible running mate for some time; in August, 2003, he met with him to propose the idea and to suggest that they announce their pact before the Iowa caucus, according to a McCain aide. Then, in the spring of 2004, in a series of phone conversations with McCain, Kerry offered to augment the power of the Vice-Presidency with the defense portfolio—in effect, a combined Vice-President and Secretary of Defense, according to John Weaver and Mark Salter. "Kerry was saying, 'You can still call yourself a Republican,' and John was saying, 'No! I can't just call myself a Republican,'" Salter recalled. " 'We don't have the same philosophy. I'm a hawk, I'm for nation-building, I'm pro-life, I'm a free trader, I believe in small government. If you're hit by a lightning bolt and I become President, the people who voted for you will feel betrayed.' "

Kerry asked Warren Beatty, who is a good friend of McCain's, to call him. Beatty is a diehard Democrat who disagrees with McCain on a number of issues but likes him, and he admires his efforts to reduce the influence of money in politics. "I thought he might do it," Beatty told me. "Of course, I'm a fantasist by trade." Even as Vice-President, he went on, "With John's personality, he would be able to say what he wanted to say, and to do quite a bit." He paused. "Whether that would be good for John Kerry was less clear."

McCain's crossover appeal is a curious phenomenon. His maverick image as "the real deal" (in Beatty's words) excites people, much more than his positions on issues. In matters of style, McCain seems like a Democrat—cultivator of the press, defender of the underdog, scathing critic of some leaders of the Christian right, anti-establishment rebel. Hated as he is by the leaders of the N.R.A. and the National Right to Life Committee, he even has the requisite enemies. "Those pro-life guys always suspected him," a former aide who worked for McCain for many years said. "He got the benefit of the pro-life label but would never go out and make speeches for them. . . . I think he feels that government should not be involved, but it is, and he took a fairly expedient position." Several other friends of McCain's also told me that he chose to be pro-life when he first ran for Congress because it would have been more difficult to win as a Republican in Arizona otherwise. In any case, he has been unwaveringly pro-life for the last twenty-four years.

"McCain really is a Republican," Anthony Cordesman, who is at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and who worked for McCain in the late eighties and early nineties, said emphatically. "One of the difficulties you have with someone that active who starts out on the right and often ends up in the middle is that people assume—because of his pragmatic approach—that he agrees with them politically. But he does not." And during the Kerry overtures, he continued, "John was confronted with a lot of people trying to push him into a role he was very uncomfortable with—as a crossover into the Democratic Party, with agendas that he does not share."

The Kerry offer carried other risks, too. Chuck Larson recounted to me a conversation that McCain and he had over breakfast one day, when the speculation about a Kerry-McCain ticket was most feverish. "I said, 'Let's just say you accept it, John. Today the press is salivating about this dream team. But it would quickly shift from stories about this bipartisan dream team to people saying you're an opportunist, you're a traitor, you're doing this because you've hated Bush ever since what he did to you in 2000—instead of focussing on the issues, and who the two of you are.' "

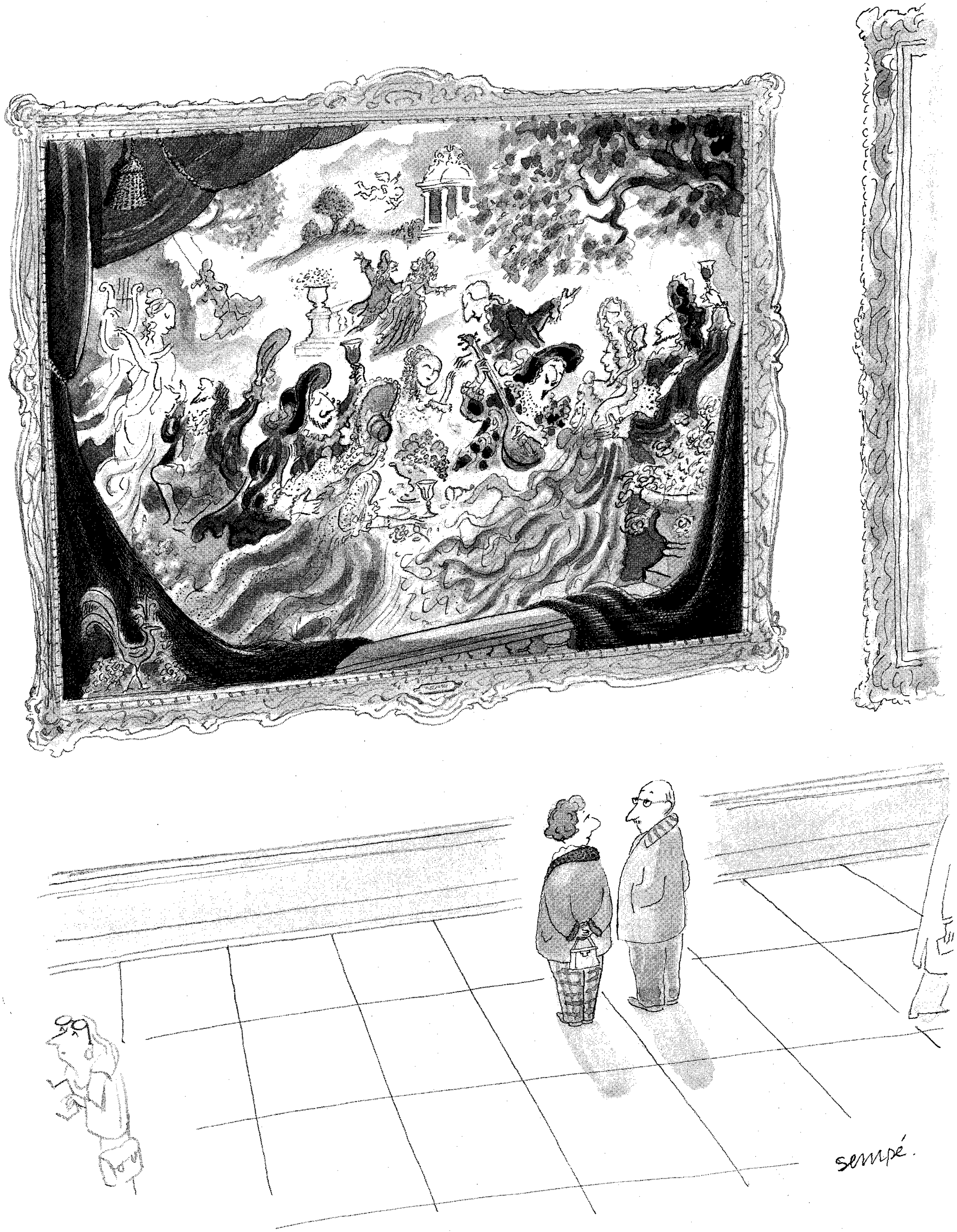
Moreover, if McCain and Kerry won, McCain's paramount ambition would be defeated. As Rick Davis told me, "It would mean he would end his political career as Vice-President." Still, McCain is always exhorting Americans to sacrifice for the greater good. I asked McCain whether a Kerry-McCain team wouldn't have been the best way to heal the divisiveness that he deplores. "I would have been a man without a country!" McCain protested. "The Democrats never would have really accepted me, the Republicans would never trust me again. And, as I told John, not only would my having the defense portfolio probably have been unconstitutional—it wouldn't have worked! Say there's something like the Cuban missile crisis—it's got to be the President who makes those decisions."

He also brought up an issue that dogged Kerry throughout the campaign—Kerry's having voted for the war but against the eighty-seven-billion-dollar measure to fund it. "On the fundamental question of going to war, he agreed, but then because at the time he had to beat Howard Dean he voted against the money. Americans do not understand why you would say, 'Send them, but don't pay for them, O.K.?' And, look, that's when you gotta stand up," McCain said, his voice rising. "He's a friend of mine! But you gotta stand up for what you believe in! He knew you had to fund those troops! But he voted against it for political expediency."

Several people close to McCain told me that he believed that Kerry was too indecisive to be President. I asked if that was true. "Well, everybody knows John is indecisive," McCain began. But then he got back on message. "Really, I just believed that at this time Bush would make the better commander-in-chief. Not that one was bad, but the other was better."

After it became clear that McCain would not accept an offer to be the Vice-Presidential nominee on the Kerry ticket, the Bush White House made its overture. Weaver recalled, "One of Bush's strategists called me, and said they wanted to have coffee. I didn't even tell John. Afterward, I went over to see him. 'John, I just had coffee with Karl Rove.' " He imitated McCain: " 'The end of the world is near! Armageddon! Armageddon!' "

It was the first time that Rove, Bush's chief political strategist, and Weaver had spoken since 1989. They had been working together on campaigns in Texas, but after a severe falling out had been estranged ever since. After the 2000 campaign, moreover, the Bush Administration punished those who had worked for McCain. "Rove put it out strongly that they didn't want McCain people doing any campaign work," Davis said. "People couldn't make a living. I don't know any McCain operative who could get a job in the party structure." (Rove says this is "absolutely not true.") Unable to find



"This reminds me—is it this weekend or next that we're going to the Williamsons'?"

work with a Republican candidate, Weaver briefly switched parties. When I asked him whether, in their meeting, Rove had apologized for what happened in South Carolina, he hesitated. "Not really an apology," he said. "There was an acknowledgment of things that had happened. I said it was water under the bridge. I don't think it's fair to say more than that."

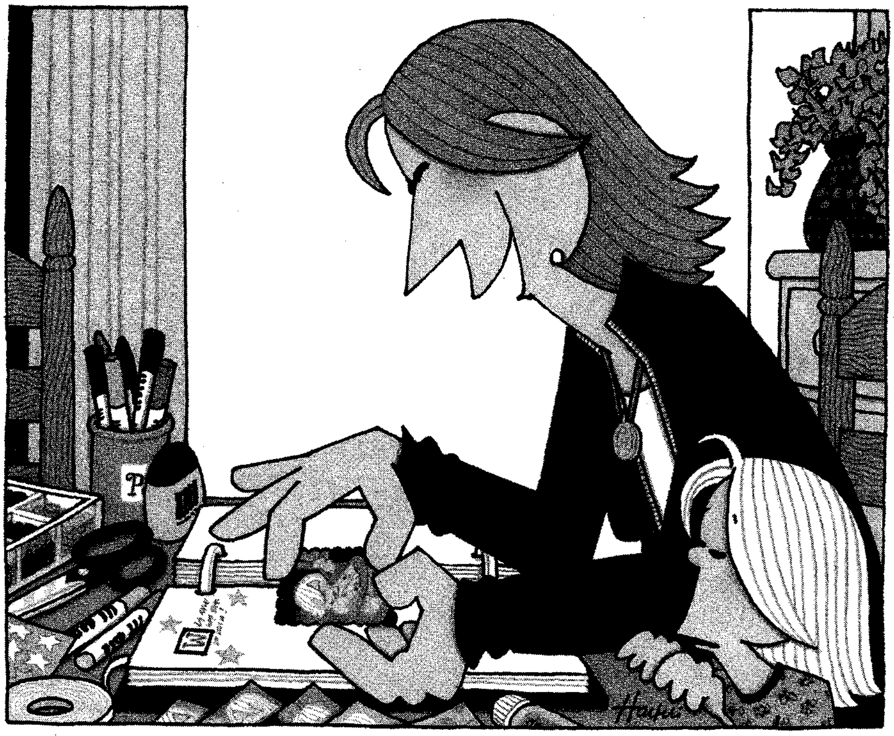
Mainly, Rove was asking for McCain's help. Was it an easy decision for McCain? Weaver paused. "John made the decision. People forget—he's a Republican. He's a conservative Republican. And he always supported the President's foreign policy, notwithstanding his legitimate criticism of Bush's handling of the war. So it was easy at the intellectual level—lots of things are easy at that level—but," he said, tapping his chest, "they don't feel right."

Whatever ambivalence McCain may have felt was not in evidence as he set out on the campaign trail with Bush. McCain declared that the war in Iraq was a conflict between good and evil which threatened the security of the United States. Even without the discovery of any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, he asserted, the decision to go to war, which he had strongly advocated, was the right one—"I would do it again today."

"John's was the strongest credible voice in Congress supporting the President's actions against Saddam Hussein," Lindsey Graham said. "His support was critical." Some of those closest to McCain thought he was going overboard. His daughter Meghan, a student at Columbia, who voted for Kerry, called McCain and chastised him when she saw him on television making statements she considered baseless. "Once, when John was talking on TV about what a great wartime leader Bush had been, my wife had to leave the room," Chuck Larson, whose son-in-law has been flying F-18s over Iraq, told me. But many friends point out that once McCain agreed to join the Bush campaign team he would not hold back. "In for a dime, in for a dollar," he commented to aides, who ribbed him about his role change. Kerry apparently took McCain's conversion hard. According to a key Democratic strategist, it was not McCain's rejection that angered him—he had always understood the odds were long. But Kerry had believed that they were bound by a special friendship, first forged in the nineteen-nineties, when they worked together to normalize U.S. relations with Vietnam. And when McCain moved into his political mode—praising President Bush so extravagantly that Kerry seemed diminished by the comparison—Kerry felt betrayed.

McCain's evident pragmatism was at odds with his image as someone whose fast-boiling anger ("McCain moments," as his staff labels his eruptions) often leads to enduring enmity. But McCain has a history of fighting hard and eventually getting over it. Having suffered years of abuse as a P.O.W. in Vietnam, he nonetheless worked to restore U.S. relations with Vietnam. For years, he refused to deal with Fred Wertheimer, then the head of Common Cause, who filed the complaint that led to the Keating Five investigation; then, in the late nineties, he and Wertheimer began working with each other on campaign-finance reform, and today they are close allies. Senator Trent Lott is said to have told reporters during the 2000 campaign that McCain was unstable, as a result of his captivity; they did not speak for several years, but are now quite friendly. "People mistake the ferocity of the fight for its longevity—it's that he comes at you like a Mack truck," Salter said. "But I have seen his enemies become his friends all the time." In this instance, of course, the reconciliation had distinct implications for 2008.

When I asked McCain about being something of an outsider in his own party, he said, "When people are in close races, I am the first Republican who is asked to come and appear for that person. I am the most sought-after of all Republicans. In this last campaign, I was the one asked by the President to travel and campaign with him." He continued, "When you look at the rank and file of ordinary Republicans, I'm extremely popular—it's some of the party apparatchiks who still harbor bad feelings toward me. But it is a little hard for them to do that now, because of my strong support for Bush." He concluded, "Particularly since the 2004 campaign, there has been a great softening of this dislike for me."


"I'm making a scrapbook to document the most embarrassing moments of your life."

"I think he's running for President. Don't you, Joe?" Roberta McCain, John McCain's mother, asked, fixing her azure-eyed gaze upon Joe Donoghue, who has been her son's assistant for the past eighteen years. Donoghue nodded vigorously. In 2000, Roberta said, "I never expected him to get elected, and didn't care if he was. I didn't think he had enough money, enough expertise, enough anything! I was surprised he did as well as he did." But now, she said, "I've changed my attitude, because I think he would make a very good President."

She went further. "I think the one chance we have of getting a party of integrity is John McCain, and I don't know anybody else who's trying to do it." Regarding his motivation, she volunteered, "I think his only mission in life—and I raise my right hand—is to serve God and his country. We're a religious family. Not to mention"—she broke off, laughing—"that I never go to church and my church is right across the street!"

When McCain's supporters are asked about the issue of his age—he will be seventy-two in 2008—they often point to his mother. It is easy to see why. When I arrived at her apartment in the Kalorama neighborhood of Washington, she threw open the door: a beautiful white-haired woman, in a Chanel-style jacket, pleated skirt, and high-heeled shoes. She was standing in a foyer with red silk billowing slightly from the ceiling, the walls painted with a gorgeous mural. She told me with a laugh that she had just redone the apartment, even though she is ninety-three. She was leaving shortly for a three-month trip through Europe, travelling some of the time with her identical twin sister, to France and England, then going on to India; she rents a car on these excursions, and enjoys driving everywhere she goes. (She did not mention that not long ago she was stopped for speeding, going over 100 m.p.h., near Flagstaff, Arizona.) Paris would be her first stop; she planned to go to Maxim's for Christmas dinner, and the Lido on New Year's Eve.

She said that she had been surprised to read in her son's book that he did not really want to go to the Naval Academy. "I will say this: when that baby was born, I assumed he was going to go to the Naval Academy," she went on. "It sounds so corny when I think about it now, but if someone's son went to Yale I would say, 'Isn't that strange, why would he go to Yale and not to the Naval Academy?' It was a tradition, and I think it was a wonderful tradition. I think the Navy has more know-how, more sophistication, more integrity, more honesty than any other facet of the world. There are people who are made for the Navy, and I was one. I liked everything about it—even the lousy pay!" She went to look for something in her study and returned with a small piece of paper. "My husband went into the Navy in 1927 and retired in 1972—four years in the Academy, forty-one years on active duty, and he had the top job." Reading from the paper, she said, "When he retired, he got two thousand three hundred and forty-six dollars in monthly pay. And paid taxes on it!" Admiral McCain died in 1981.

There was something in "Faith of My Fathers" that I was curious about. When McCain's parents were informed that he had been shot down, he wrote, they were in London and were about to leave for a dinner party at the Iranian Ambassador's residence. They had attended the dinner and not said anything to the other guests about the news. Roberta recalled now that there was a dessert that she'd never seen before, something with spun filaments of sugar and ice cream, and when tapped with a spoon the outer surface shattered. When I asked whether the evening wasn't unspeakably difficult for her, she replied, "It didn't occur to me not to go. You know, I'm a pretty stoic person. I take things as they come and I don't fly off the handle. It just never crossed my mind." She paused, and added, "You can't just not show up at an Embassy dinner party like that—it was a sit-down dinner."

I asked whether she was surprised that her son had run as a pro-life candidate. Without answering the question, she gave her own view. "I think it's nobody's business, except the woman's. And I also don't think it's a political thing—I think it's a spiritual thing, and I don't think it has any place in politics at all. If a woman wants to have an abortion, I think it's O.K."

As for his having campaigned so aggressively for President Bush: "All I've got to say is, Bush is sure a lucky man! I don't know whether he will acknowledge it or cares or anything else, but he's the luckiest President we've ever had."

In the aftermath of the election, she said, she was not at all sanguine about the fact that "the same people are still running the show." She went on, "So I'm not going to get up and cheer or start being Pollyanna about things. Somebody's got to straighten this country out, because people are just losing all respect for the whole government. It made me so mad, the minute Colin Powell resigned they started sniping, making cracks." She looked at me. "Now, what else do you want me to shoot my mouth off about?" she asked, with a dazzling smile.

McCain's friends and staff people may be geared up for 2008, but his wife insists that the two of them have not yet reached a decision. "People don't believe me," Cindy McCain said. "They say, 'Oh, c'mon'—but it's true." There are health considerations; since his surgery for melanoma in 2000, McCain is checked by a dermatologist every three months. And about a year ago Cindy suffered a stroke, which caused speech difficulty at first, and memory loss. I interviewed her in the lovely, sprawling house in Phoenix where she grew up, and which she recently redesigned in a more distinctly Southwestern, adobe style. A pretty woman, with long, well-coiffed blond hair and large violet-colored eyes, she was dressed in jeans, a cashmere sweater, and red sandals. She is very thin, slightly fragile-looking, and this day seemed somewhat on edge. During the 2000 campaign, she said, she had been afraid of making some mistake that would hurt her husband; the experience was trying, but the good part was that she got to see so much of him. Afterward, she needed hand surgery, from having shaken so many hands; she showed me the scars, extending from her right hand up her arm, and said, "It's been fused. So there won't be any problem now—it's bionic!" Not long before we met, she had appeared on the Larry King show with other people who had suffered strokes at a relatively young age (she was forty-nine). And when King asked, "Has the Senator been very sympathetic?" she responded, "Yes. . . . Let me explain that. He was very confused in the beginning. 'How could it happen to my wife, I'm eighteen years older than

Victoria Roberts

"Of course we've already had this conversation. There isn't a conversation we haven't already had."

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she is!'. . . So, on his behalf, I think he's trying to understand all this. It's a lot for him to take in." They celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary on May 17th.

The celebrity that McCain has enjoyed since the 2000 campaign is qualitatively different from what it was before. He used to come home most weekends, but now he is away a great deal of the time. And, when they go out together, strangers clamor for his attention. "We went to the Super Bowl a few weeks ago—I'd been jostled before, but nothing like this," she said. "He has reached rock-star status. But he is always nice, generous, always takes time with people. I get frustrated sometimes, but not John. His attitude is 'Enjoy it—it won't last forever.' "

Early in the morning on the last Sunday in February, I met McCain near his house in Oak Creek. A month before, he had attended the World Economic Forum, in Davos; two weekends later, he had co-led the U.S. delegation to the Munich Conference on Security Policy, stopping in Ukraine to meet with President Yushchenko; and days after his return from Munich he had led a congressional trip to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Pakistan. (Lindsey Graham, who accompanied him on these travels, commented, "Anybody who questions his vigor and ability should travel with him. I love going on a trip with John, but I'm happy to get home.")

Now, at a motel used by TV networks to film interviews with him when he is at his retreat, McCain was to be interviewed from Washington by Chris Wallace, on Fox News. President Hosni Mubarak had just asked Egypt's parliament to amend the constitution to allow for freer elections, and McCain was telling Wallace, before they went on the air, how important he believed U.S. pressure on Egypt was. "I hammered the Egyptian Foreign Minister in Munich," he was saying. Then, in the interview, he made the kinds of tough statements that have long been his hallmark in the area of foreign policy. He said he was "proud of Condi Rice," for having abruptly cancelled a planned trip to Egypt, because of the arrest of a leading opposition politician. He attacked the signing of an agreement whereby Russia would supply Iran with fuel for its first nuclear power plant. "Putin seems to me to be acting somewhat like a spoiled child," McCain declared. "The United States, and our European allies, I think, should start out by saying, Vladimir, you're not welcome at the next G-8 conference!"—a reference to the countries making up the Group of Eight. But when Wallace asked him whether he thought that President Bush should have been tougher in his press conference with Putin at a meeting in Slovakia a few days earlier, McCain suddenly became judicious. "It's hard for me to second-guess the President," he said repeatedly.

At the end of the interview, Wallace commented that Republicans tend to be orderly people, always choosing the next one up—Bob Dole in 1996, George W. Bush in 2000. Who will be the next one up in 2008?

"Jeb Bush!" McCain said, and then laughed. "If you're looking at dynasties. . . ." Then he added that he believes it will be a wide-open situation. "Republican voters will have a great luxury, because they'll have a lot to choose from," he concluded, smiling.

McCain set out for the local Starbucks to pick up coffee and newspapers to bring back to the house. He was in high spirits about his rejoinder to Wallace. "I shook him up! I said, 'Jeb Bush!' Hah!" he chortled happily. "I said, 'Republicans will have the luxury of a lot of choices!' " With the women behind the coffee counter, he engaged in his usual banter: "How ya doin'? Where's Patty? Tell her I was here, looking for her. Tell her I was disappointed." After driving for a few miles, he turned off the highway onto a dirt path, which twisted down a steep incline, finally coming out into a clearing. Hidden Valley is the one place where McCain does, in a manner of speaking, relax. He bounded out of the car and led me on the mandatory tour. The McCains' house is built near the banks of the creek, which was roaring past, swollen from recent heavy rains, and gleaming in the sunlight. He showed off dozens of fruit trees, about to blossom. "This is the thing I'm most proud of," McCain said, pointing to the large nest of a common black hawk, and describing how he had watched the mother teach the fledgling to fly. Last year, he told me, Cindy looked toward a nearby hilltop and saw a mountain lion, surrounded by her cubs, gazing down at her. There are also foxes, bobcats, javelinas, and coyotes. He pointed out the spacious guesthouse, which he refers to as "the cabin." He has scandalized some Republicans in Arizona by inviting Democratic politicians here, including former Senator Tom Daschle. McCain loves to mix things up. As Lindsey Graham put it, "He'll have Warren Beatty and a right-wing reactionary like me."

We went to the Harpers' house, a short walk away, for breakfast. Sharon and Oliver Harper were there, and Lorene and Aaron Lueck, who manage the property, and live there as well. Before preparing breakfast, McCain, who likes to cook, summoned the group to the TV room to watch the Fox News interview. We all sat quietly, focussed on his image as though we were in church—no one more so than McCain. At the end, he laughed again, loudly, about the Jeb Bush line. He said that Mark Salter would be mad at him for that one. "I sort of am, too," Sharon Harper said. McCain returned to the kitchen and, while cooking bacon and sausage, amused himself, as he often does, by ribbing one of his companions. "Aaron's a member of the N.R.A.," McCain told me. "He wore his N.R.A. cap when he went to see 'Fahrenheit 9/11,' in the local movie theatre." Aaron commented that the only issue on which he differs with the N.R.A. is its support for assault rifles—"because I don't think they're good for much." "They're good in schools," McCain said, winking at me.

After breakfast, I asked McCain about the speech he had delivered in Munich two weeks earlier. McCain always enjoys setting off fireworks at the annual conference, but his speech this year was especially incendiary. In the Republican foreign-policy divide between idealists and realists, McCain unequivocally identifies himself as an idealist. He appeared on the podium with the Russian Minister of Defense, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs—and he did not spare any of them. First, he established his premise: September 11th made plain that the security of Europe and North America is dependent upon the promotion of democracy in the Middle East—and, ultimately, in the world. "The security of New York or Madrid or Munich depends in part on the degree of freedom in Riyadh or Baghdad or Cairo," he declared. And, therefore, we can no longer afford the view that "a despotic ally [is] preferable to an unfriendly democracy," he said. "Russia is actually moving backward. Mr. Putin . . . is reasserting the Kremlin's old-style central control." He also attacked Saudi Arabia, where "repression remains the norm." In Egypt, President Mubarak "has reigned as a dictator for almost twenty-four years, and he seeks yet another term, while grooming his son for what one newspaper described as a 'pharaonic succession.' " If these and other governments continued in their anti-democratic ways, he said, "we should reassess our relationships—including the billions of dollars in bilateral aid that flows to them."

U.S. aid to Egypt, of course, has long been a buttress to the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David peace accords. Did he not worry that a cutoff of aid might be destabilizing? I asked. "Well, there wouldn't be a war," McCain said. "You could make that argument fifteen or twenty years ago. But it's no longer viable to prop up despotic regimes, instead of democracies that may not be particularly on our side." He added, "I'm not just picking on Egypt. I said it about Egypt and I said it about Iran and I said it about Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian Foreign Minister said to me, You're exactly right on everything except Egypt."

I noted that his language is even more militant than President Bush's. McCain agreed, but he added, "In all appreciation of my oratory and positions, it's tougher when you're the President. You gotta be more careful to maintain the balance."

McCain cannot be termed a neoconservative, since he has no apostasy in his past, but neoconservatives are happy to call him theirs. As William Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, told me, "Maybe you'd say he was more neo-Reaganite. But his views on foreign policy are neoconservative: American strength, but also American principles; for nation-building, as well as for removing dictators. If you go back to the mid-nineties, you see he was more that way than people realize." McCain was one of the few Republicans who supported intervening in Bosnia in 1995. He also supported the now famous 1998 letter to President Bill Clinton from members of the Project for the New American Century, which called for the U.S. to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—and to be prepared to do so militarily, without being "crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the U.N. Security Council." Some of McCain's advisers like to point out that President Bush has only recently arrived at the

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pro-democracy, interventionist foreign policy that McCain has long championed. His hawkish friends admire his muscularity. As Lindsey Graham said, "If North Korea and Iran tried to expand their nuclear capabilities, they would feel the wrath of a John McCain Presidency." In Munich, where a full-scale clash between idealistic Wilsonian principles and European Realpolitik occurred, he enthusiastically led the Wilsonian charge.

"Our European friends don't have a strong military, so they always believe that diplomacy is the answer," McCain told me.

Wolfgang Ischinger, the German Ambassador to the United States, who attended the conference in Munich and listened with interest to McCain's speech, tried to explain the view from the other side. "As older societies, we tend to think of ourselves as more experienced in the way societies evolve, and we tend to be skeptical of Americans who seem to think that if you believe hard enough, and you muster enough resources, you can change the world," he told me. "In the last year or so, as we've engaged in discussions about the transformation of the Middle East and democracy, I have told my American friends that the region in this world that has seen the most transformation and change is Central and Eastern Europe—without shedding a drop of blood. So don't preach to us. And don't think transformative change will work according to mechanistic rules. This is very complicated. Changing the way people think often has to do with religious and cultural issues—we tend to think of them as long-term, and Americans think, Let's solve the problem in the next four years!"

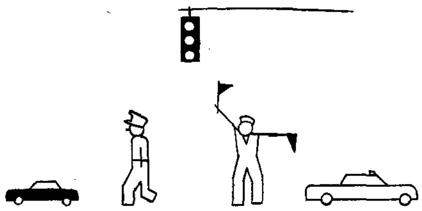
The morning after McCain delivered his speech, he attended a breakfast for the U.S. delegation, hosted by the Germans. The U.S. delegates sat on one side of the long table, and the German officials on the other. "I was very tough on 'em," McCain told me. On Iraq, he said that they "should try to help, and I don't mean militarily, because I know they won't do that, but there's a thousand things they could do to help Iraq." On the subject of Iran and European efforts to negotiate over its nuclear program, the conversation became particularly heated. "One of the German guys said, 'Well, the Iranians have now frozen their procedures toward nuclear.' And I said, 'That's not what I hear.' And he said, 'My intelligence is as good as yours.' I said, 'I don't think so.' "

Mark Udall, a Democratic representative from Colorado, and the son of McCain's friend and mentor Mo Udall, the longtime congressman from Arizona, was a member of the congressional delegation in Munich. "John likes to challenge friend and foe," Udall said. But the breakfast was surprising even by McCain standards. "I hadn't seen him quite as fierce as he was at that breakfast," Udall, who has attended the conference for the last several years, said. The German official who was involved in the negotiations with the Iranians was describing the process, Udall recalled, "and John interrupted him on two or three occasions, saying, Why are you doing this, why are you doing that, and it was borderline rude. He even pushed the diplomatic protocol there. But I think he was trying to make a point that this was very serious, and that just talking to the Iranians was not going to get the job done."

One of the Germans who was present recalled, "John McCain spoke more than any other participant at the breakfast. He was the leader. He said, 'Why don't you guys help us out in Iraq?' And one of our guys said, 'But we have, we have trained police.' McCain said, 'That's laughable!' He *crushed* them. But it was a battle of people who were not equals—a U.S. senator and Presidential candidate, full of self-confidence, and a bureaucrat, extremely restricted, with instructions about what he can say. It was not a fair match.

"Was it helpful?" the German participant asked. "Surely not. I don't think he was interested in listening to why we believe this is the best way forward. John McCain is like a charging bull. He loves to fight," the official added. "That morning, it didn't win him new friends."

McCain has suggested that as President he would be more measured and diplomatic, at least in his choice of words. The best evidence of his ability to do that is the way he has conducted himself, in recent months, with his colleagues and with the President.



McCain is famous for his verbal attacks against appropriators on the Senate floor. When I asked Weaver about this, he replied, "You haven't read about his gratuitously taking on other members on the floor in the last six months, have you?" I said I had not. "Good," he replied.

McCain is chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, which since last year has been investigating the Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his business partner Michael Scanlon, and their dealings with Indian tribes. Abramoff is also the central figure in corruption and influence-peddling investigations by the Justice Department and the Interior Department. All of these have turned up potentially damaging disclosures about trips taken and gifts received by lawmakers, including House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. Many of McCain's colleagues were fearful that now, in the Abramoff investigation, he would find it irresistible to cast a wide net, as he had in an earlier investigation into a Boeing tanker deal. In that deal, which was supported by the White House, the Pentagon, and key members of Congress, McCain exposed grievous flaws in oversight. Two Air Force officials resigned, two Boeing officials have gone to jail, the deal was scrapped, and McCain's reputation as a giant killer was burnished. McCain decided to address members of his caucus in order to calm their apprehensions about the Indian Affairs Committee investigation. "There's a lot of nervousness among a lot of people in Congress about trips they went on," McCain told me, "and that's why I talked to the caucus and explained that this is not a witch hunt. I have a narrow mandate at the Indian Affairs Committee. We'll be tracing the trail of the Indians' money, seeing who defrauded them—not looking at records of members' trips."

His team-player posture is nowhere more marked than in his relationship with President Bush. As Wes Gullett commented, "If you're going to run for President, you don't want to gratuitously fight with someone the Republican-primary voters love." McCain hasn't changed long-held positions to do the

President's bidding, however. In March, he voted against Bush's plan to allow oil drilling in the coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (the bill passed without his vote). He has said that he would vote against the filibuster-rule change known as the "nuclear option," and last week he helped lead the protracted negotiations between moderates of both parties to find a compromise.

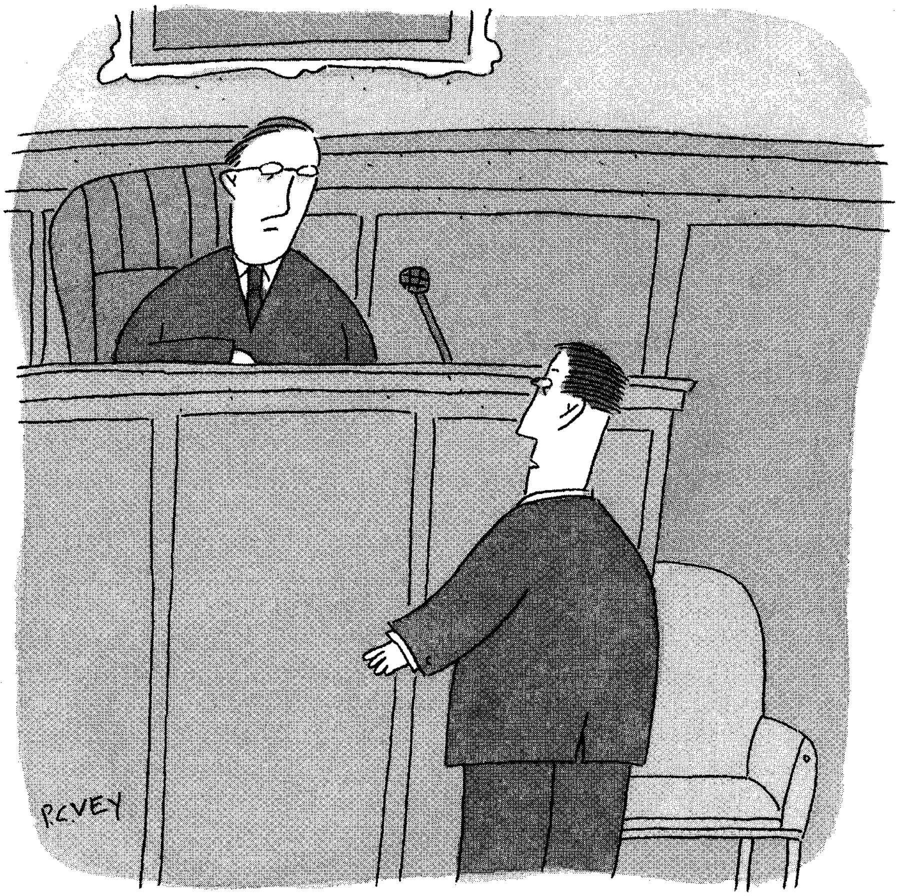
Even so, McCain's language about the areas in which he and Bush disagree has become reasoned and moderate. And when the President really needs his help he gives it. In December, McCain told me, "I'm not playing on Social Security." When I asked why not, he said, "It's just not my issue." Weaver was more explicit. "It's not clear where Social Security is going to go. There's no reason for him to be out front." But in late March—by which time the Social Security reform campaign had gone very badly for the President—McCain accompanied Bush on a three-state swing to pitch his reform plan. He supported Bush's insistence on the urgency of the crisis ("The longer we wait," McCain warned, "the more Draconian the changes will have to be"), and he castigated the A.A.R.P. for recklessness in opposing Bush's plan.

McCain gave a speech on the Senate floor, supporting the President's nomination of John Bolton to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, after that nomination engendered doubts even among some Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "If a temper and an unorthodox management style were disqualifiers from government service, I would bet a large number of people in Washington would be out of a job," McCain declared. ("Bolton called to thank him before John could even get back to his office," Weaver said.)

Immigration reform is something about which McCain is passionate; he strongly opposed Arizona's Proposition 200, which calls for the denial of state welfare benefits to illegal aliens, and which passed in last year's election. And he repeatedly emphasizes that he has found a philosophical soul mate in President Bush, who is the former governor of a border state. In the first week after the election, McCain went to the White House to meet with the President and Karl Rove, and they discussed immigration reform. "The President and I share exactly the same views on the issue," McCain told me. "He believes there are willing workers and willing employers and we ought to match them up. He recognizes that our borders are broken and we need to protect them, but we can only do it in a dual approach." McCain and Bush are not as close on this issue as McCain says. McCain and Senator Edward Kennedy recently introduced comprehensive legislation that would strengthen border enforcement but also provide for a guest-worker program, as well as a path to residency for the illegal immigrants (between eight million and thirteen million) who are already here, something that many of his Republican colleagues deride as "amnesty" and that the President has not indicated he supports. McCain acknowledges that passing such comprehensive legislation will be extremely difficult, since it is an enormously divisive issue for Republicans. But he believes that the political consequences will be historic. "By enacting meaningful immigration reform, the Republican Party will have the majority of the Hispanic vote for the next generation," McCain said.

In a footnote that seems to capture the new spirit of amity between the White House and the once renegade Senator, Weaver—blacklisted no longer—is McCain's liaison to the White House. McCain aides even talk enthusiastically about Karl Rove helping McCain in 2008. And his supporters have been observing this rapprochement with delight. In the months since the campaign, Ken Duberstein, a Republican lobbyist who supported McCain in 2000, told me, "John has continued to be one of Bush's strongest supporters. I think he has been quite careful. He's making all the right moves."

McCain's current cultivation of his relationship with Bush may also be reflected in what he does not do. When the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, last spring, McCain was at his best. It was



"Your Honor, all this pretrial publicity has made my client look fat."

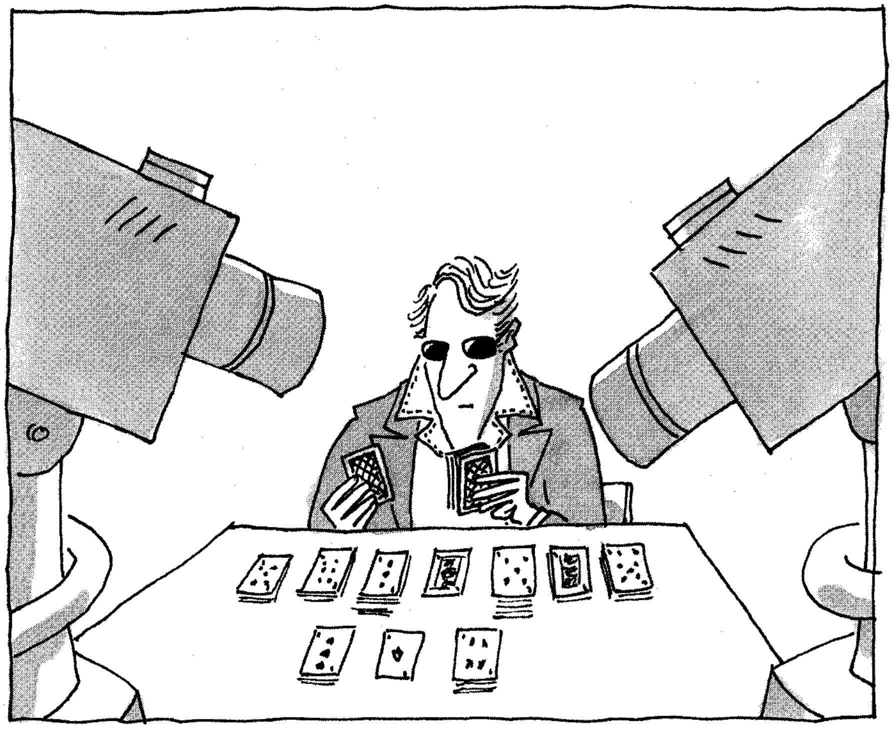
• •

not an unfamiliar sight—the Senator, red-faced, neck veins bulging, repeatedly interrupting an evasive witness whom it seemed he might like to throttle. But his rage, for once, seemed altogether appropriate, as he demanded, "Secretary Rumsfeld, in all due respect, you've got to answer this question!" At the time, McCain made it plain that he was going to push the Bush Administration to divulge everything, and quickly. "The facts have got to come out now," he said to the *Times.*

A year has passed, and there have been at least ten major investigations, but, as Senator Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan, recently pointed out, there has been "no assessment of accountability of any senior officials, either within or outside of the Department of Defense, for policies that may have contributed to abuses of prisoners." Levin and McCain are longtime members of the Armed Services Committee; Levin is a former chairman, and McCain is slated to become chairman in 2007, if the Republicans keep control of the Senate. Levin told me that he has been urging the current chairman, Senator John Warner, to hold further hearings, in order to pursue an investigation that would extend to the top of the chain of command, the Secretary of Defense. Levin also advocates the formation of an independent commission, similar to the 9/11 Commission, to investigate detainee abuse.

This might seem a natural issue for McCain, and he did support an amendment to a defense-authorization bill that affirmed the policy of the United States not to engage in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. But, since the furor over Abu Ghraib subsided, he has not grabbed the megaphone, in the way that he so often does when something makes him angry and he wants to set it right. When I raised the subject of detainee abuse with him, McCain said he believes that it is important to pass legislation that will clarify U.S. interrogation policies. "We can't be saying, 'Get some information from this guy, soften him up, but not too much.' " And he thinks that such clarity is particularly important, because there are two different categories of prisoners: "those who are eligible for the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war, and others who are outright terrorists, who have none of these protections but still have protections by international treaties, such as the torture treaty and others." McCain emphasized that he agrees with the Bush Administration's decision that the Geneva Conventions be applied in this selective way. And he made it plain that he was unwilling to constrain interrogators, in certain situations: "Look—you're from New York. If we apprehend a terrorist and he has information about a plan that is going to kill thousands of people, what would you do?"

LIGHTS... CAMERA... NO ACTION...



THE FLAW IN "CELEBRITY SOLITAIRE"

I reminded him that he has always held that torture doesn't work, because eventually the victim will do or say whatever his torturers want, as McCain did when he signed a confession in Vietnam. "Yes," he said, "but in that kind of situation, thousands of lives at risk, you have to do something, try whatever you can."

When I asked him if he would join Levin to demand that the Armed Services Committee conduct a thorough investigation, he replied that there had already been a number of investigations. And he would not support the formation of a 9/11-type commission. "9/11 was different—it was a unique event in our history," he said. Besides, he added, "it would never pass in the Senate. Never."

It is of course something that the Bush Administration would oppose—and McCain appears unlikely to jeopardize his new standing, on this or any other issue. In several interviews, it was striking how forcefully he defended the President. When I asked McCain what, in his view, made Bush such a strong wartime leader, he pointed to his having gone to the ruins of the World Trade Center on September 14th and rallied the nation. (This was the speech in which Bush said simply that the terrorists "will hear from all of us soon.")

McCain explained, "There are moments—all John F. Kennedy said was 'I'm a Berliner.' All Ronald Reagan said was 'Tear down this wall.' Usually, it's one day that's defining."

McCain frequently comments that we have paid a "heavy price" because we did not have enough troops in Iraq. He has also expressed concern that the Army Reserve and the National Guard are overextended, and have fallen short of recruiting goals. I asked whether the price in American lives and the damage to the Army were inconsistent with his assertion that Bush has been an exemplary wartime leader. McCain paused, then said, with some feeling, "Everything that happens, the President is responsible, O.K.? I think if you would say that the President deserves the blame, then he deserves the credit for the election that just took place in Iraq. And, if you see the Middle East now changing, as many of us believe that it is, then history will judge him incredibly well." And, he added, with a slight smile, "The Europeans will have been on the wrong side of history. Again."

Despite some Republican strategists who believe that his moment has passed, McCain plainly feels that his moment has arrived—because, in this dangerous world, he is the leader to whom most Americans will turn. A run in 2008, moreover, would be far different from the quixotic crusade of 2000; not only does McCain have a broad national constituency and high approval ratings but, an aide points out, he has a finance committee poised to raise the hundred million or two hundred million dollars necessary to mount a powerful campaign, and an organization in every state in the country. In open primaries and the general election, moreover, he might well win Democratic voters. As Bob Kerrey told me, "He's got to be the one person the Democrats least want as the Republican candidate. I'm a Democrat, of course—but he causes people like me to think twice." Early polls show him beating both John Kerry and Hillary Clinton.

Still, the Republican primaries remain perhaps his highest hurdle. In 2000, shortly after the smear campaign led to his defeat in the South Carolina primary, McCain went to Virginia Beach, not far from where Pat Robertson lived, and hit back. "I am a pro-life, pro-family fiscal conservative and advocate of a strong defense," he told the crowd. "And yet Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and a few Washington leaders of the pro-life movement call me an unacceptable Presidential candidate. . . . Why? Because I don't pander to them, because I don't ascribe to their failed philosophy that money is our message." Gary Bauer told me he thought at the time that that speech was "self-destructive," and that, if McCain were going to run in 2008, "he has major repair work to do, reaching out to some of those individuals." In addition, he would advise McCain "to pick a battle on one of the social issues—like a pro-life justice on the Supreme Court. Don't just vote in favor but lead the charge. When Hillary and Ted Kennedy go to the floor to savage the nominee, McCain should go, and not leave it to Rick Santorum"—the outspoken Republican senator from Pennsylvania.

McCain faces an extraordinarily difficult test. The problem with his public image—as someone who says what he thinks to those in power; who is more at home in the heartland than in Washington, despite his tenure there of more than twenty years; who is essentially an anti-politician—is that he must live up to it. At the most basic level, he can't appear to be doing the kinds of things that he has attacked others for doing. The Reform Institute is a nonprofit organization in Washington that deals with campaign-finance reform and global warming. In early March, an article appeared in the *Times* pointing out that Rick Davis was its president and McCain was its chairman, and McCain was often featured in its news releases and fund-raising letters; last year, it raised about $1.3 million. For the avatar of campaign-finance reform to have this sort of close, unregulated relationship with a nonprofit (and one whose work can benefit him politically) seems unwise, at best. He has since resigned. "I should have realized how it would look. I have to be Caesar's wife," McCain said.

And, at a much more difficult level, he will have to make many of the same kinds of political calculations that his colleagues do—vis-à-vis the Bush White House, the Christian right, the N.R.A., and others—without appearing to be doing so. McCain may well be equal to this sleight of hand, because, contrary to his cultivated image, he is in many ways a born politician. Aides say that he knows instinctively what the right political move is. During last year's Presidential campaign, he advised John Kerry to stop talking so much about himself in Vietnam (the focus, also, of the Kerry introduction at the Democratic Convention which proved, in retrospect, ineffectual). No one is more masterly than McCain at exploiting his P.O.W. experience. Similarly, his talent for showmanship has enabled him to build the platform he has with the media, and to use it to his advantage whenever he pleases without appearing to be a showman. He is intuitive about which issues the public will respond to, like pork-barrel legislation, campaign-finance reform, and global warming. One aide recalled that during the 2000 town-hall meetings McCain was so attuned to what people most cared about that he was "like a one-man polling station."

McCain's political dexterity would certainly serve him well as President. But he is not nearly as "alien" in Congress as his aides insist that he is. He shares with many of his colleagues a long-term fixation on the Presidency—in his case, since at least 1997, when he confided to Chuck Larson that he wanted to run. But in McCain's continuing self-dramatization it is duty that drives him, not the self-serving ambition that impels most politicians. This is how his ardent supporters see him, too. Lindsey Graham told me, "If you spend thirty minutes with John, you understand that his goal in life is not to achieve power for the sake of achieving power. He's never been driven by becoming something." Part of the McCain mystique derives from the fact that he so frequently invokes his past—and his father's and his grandfather's—as a naval officer, as though he were still, somehow, more military man than politician. On October 9, 2001, two days after the bombing of Afghanistan began, McCain addressed the young men and women at the U.S. Naval Academy, saying, "Soon you will be the shield behind which marches the enduring message of our revolution. There is no greater duty, no greater honor. . . . Hold that honor as dearly as your country holds you. Hold it as dearly as do those who have already been called to the battle. Hold it as if it were your greatest treasure. Because it is. It is. Whatever sacrifices you must bear, you will know a happiness far more sublime than pleasure." He continued, "My warrior days were long ago, but not so long ago that I have forgotten their purpose and their reward." ♦

FICTION

THE RUSSIAN RIVIERA

BY DAVID BEZMOZGIS

"Some businessmen" was how Skinny Zyama had described the two gangsters from New Jersey.

"You want me there for a meeting with businessmen?" Kostya had asked.

"You have other plans on a Wednesday afternoon?"

"No."

"Wear a jacket," Zyama had said.

Now, stationed as instructed beside Skinny Zyama's mahogany desk, Kostya appraised the gangsters. Zyama had placed two leather armchairs in front of his desk, but only the smaller of the two had consented to sit. The larger one, the one doing all the talking, had turned his chair sideways and perched himself on its arm. Instinctively, Kostya gauged each man's weight. They were both wearing suits, but that made no difference. Kostya had been conditioned by years at the gym, and his mind conjured up a man's weight and class just as, seeing an apple, it conjured up taste and smell. He'd barely considered the gangsters before his mind had announced: Sixty-four kilos and eighty-five kilos; welterweight and cruiserweight. This was one of his few demonstrable skills—which, like the others, had brought him little profit.

The larger gangster looked powerful through the back and shoulders, but he carried himself arrogantly, gestured excessively with his hands, and punctuated his demands by thrusting out his chin. In contrast, the smaller one hardly moved at all. He kept his hands folded in his lap and followed the conversation with his eyes. His neck and his ankles were thin, and he was pale in the manner of someone who is either very sick or very spartan. Of the two, Kostya supposed that the smaller man posed the greater danger, though, to be precise, the greatest danger was posed by neither of them. The greatest danger was posed by Skinny Zyama, who had assumed an obnoxious air of invulnerability.

"These are competitive times. You could benefit from our help," the larger gangster said.

"The place is busy four nights a week," Zyama said. "Impossible to get a table Friday or Saturday without a reservation. We have the best Vegas-style floor show in the city. Professional dancers trained in Russia. Where's my competition?"

"There are other restaurants. They could become more successful."

"The other restaurants are run by imbeciles. Their customers are people who couldn't get a table here."

"With the right guidance, those restaurants could improve. With connections, they could attract popular entertainers from New York and New Jersey."

"Listen, Alla Pugacheva and Arkady Raikin could perform every Saturday night for a month and those idiots would still find a way to lose money."

"There are other possibilities. Something unfortunate could happen to your restaurant or to you."

Zyama, who had been reclining in his suède admiral's chair, tilted forward and made a production of looking the gangster in the eye. "You think you're the first ones to come in here? Understand: I'm in business all these years not because I give money to every hoodlum with his hand out."

Kostya watched the larger gangster unbutton his jacket and slide his hand inside. Cursing Skinny Zyama, Kostya took a step in the gangster's direction. If the man had a gun, there wasn't much he could do about it, but he knew that if the gangster motioned toward his pocket he was required to take a step forward. There was an understanding among everyone in the room that this was how it was supposed to be. The script had been written long ago and performed by other men in other rooms and in movies.

Seeing this, the gangster grinned. He proceeded to feel around inside his jacket, and then he extended his hand. In place of a gun was a business card.

"My gun I keep down here," he said, raising the cuff of his left trouser leg. Strapped above his ankle was a pistol in a black padded holster. "You see, we are civilized businessmen. Before we reach for that, we reach for this."

He placed the card on Skinny Zyama's desk.

"We manage very respectable artists. We provide security. Many good Russian restaurants in New Jersey and Brooklyn are our customers. There is a phone number on the card. It is our mobile phone. Think about what we said and call. If we don't hear from you, we'll come Saturday night to see for ourselves how successful you are."

After the gangsters left, Skinny Zyama picked up the business card and flicked it into his wastebasket. He passed his hand along the surface of his desk and examined his fingertips for dust. "Small-timers. Nobodies. Who do they think they're dealing with?"

Kostya waited for a few moments to see if he would say anything else. Zyama rapped his knuckles on the edge of the desk. He spun the knob of his Rolodex. He reached into a drawer for a pack of cigarettes.

"Is that it?" Kostya asked.

"That one sits staring like a mummy. The other one with the gun on his leg. Think they can intimidate me in my own place. I shit on them from a tall bridge," Zyama said.

That was Zyama's final word. He was Zyama Karp, the impresario of the Russian Riviera restaurant. He was a man of influence. Not someone to be pushed around. And, after all, he had Kostya, a Siberian boxing champion.

"If they come back on Saturday, you take care of them," Zyama said.

From the Russian Riviera, Kostya drove to the Prima Donna Ballet Academy to return a blouse that Ivetta had forgotten at his apartment. Ivetta frequently forgot things at his apartment, only to discover that the thing she had forgotten was exactly the thing she could not live without. Kostya no longer resisted this; he had learned that it was best simply to return the item—a blouse, a pair of earrings, a lipstick—as soon as possible. He had also learned that once Ivetta resumed possession of these things her need for them diminished.

Ivetta was waiting at the entrance to the ballet school. She took a moment to confirm that he had brought the blouse, then lifted herself into the van.

"I have five minutes," she said. "We should drive around the block."

As Kostya eased the van onto the street, Ivetta looked up at her mother's office, on the second floor of the Ballet Academy.

"I think I see her standing there," Ivetta said.

Kostya interpreted this as a signal to drive faster, but when he accelerated Ivetta told him to slow down. If her mother was watching, Ivetta didn't want to give her the satisfaction of seeing her behave furtively. Kostya didn't completely understand the rules that governed Ivetta's attitude toward her mother, but he knew that Luda Sorkin disapproved of him. Luda had been a prima ballerina. She was a cultured person. She was also a successful businesswoman. She had schooled her daughter in the fine arts, she had given her a university education, and she was grooming her to take over the business. That such a woman would want more for her daughter than someone who was a failed boxer, a doorman, and an illegal immigrant seemed to him perfectly reasonable. In fact, he could understand Luda's logic better than Ivetta's. Why Ivetta should not want to be with him made much more sense than why she should. When Kostya told her as much recently, she had led him from the bed to their reflection in his mirrored closet door.

"We are beautiful together," she said.

Kostya supposed they looked good. He still went to the gym five days a week and was conscious of his physique. And Ivetta had the long, slender muscles of a trained dancer. At the restaurant and on the street, Kostya was aware that men looked at her. She was attractive in the usual ways, but Kostya's eyes were always drawn to the intricate places where different parts of her joined: her shoulders, her collarbone, the backs of her knees, her ankles, her hands.

"You could be beautiful together with someone else," Kostya told her.

"Then you don't see what I see," Ivetta said glumly, and she moved away from him and hunched on the edge of the bed.

That he didn't see what Ivetta saw had been precisely the origin of the conversation, and so her answer did nothing to clarify things. Kostya considered pointing this out but knew that it would only irritate her further.

"You are honest and good," Ivetta had finally declared from her desolation at the edge of the bed.

And now, because he was honest and good, Ivetta wanted to protect him from Luda's sneering condescension. For this reason, she had asked that he find someone else to work his shift on Saturday night, when her mother was going to make a rare appearance at the Russian Riviera.

"But I am a doorman," Kostya said. "What do I care how she looks at me?"

"I care," Ivetta said.

Most of her family would be there Saturday night, and she did not want to introduce him to them under those circumstances. If they were to meet him, it should be done across a table, properly and with respect. Not with her family celebrating her grandfather's birthday while Kostya was relegated to the door or the bar—an employee.

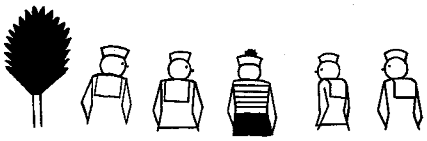
"Did you ask Zyama?" Ivetta said.

"I will."

Up until that afternoon, Kostya had been prepared to do just that, but now he couldn't imagine how it was possible. Zyama had expended considerable energy publicizing the fact that he had a Siberian boxing champion working his door—he would have opposed a change at the door on a night without gangsters. And, even if Zyama could be persuaded, Kostya's conscience would not allow it. Which meant that, as alternatives went, Kostya had two: he could work or he could quit. And he preferred to risk the possibility of gangsters against the certainty of unemployment.

To Ivetta, of course, he could confess none of this. Her reaction would be predictable and extreme. She would go to Zyama or to the police. Both of which would mean the end of his job. Also, she would likely regard the situation as further evidence of their need to run off together and start a new life in another city, far away from her mother. She had urged him to do this before, to leave his demeaning job at the Russian Riviera, to escape somewhere, get married, go to school, start a business, buy a house, have children, live happily. The idea was tempting; Kostya had no attachment to Toronto or to the Russian Riviera, but, at thirty-four, he was no longer a boy. If he quit his job and ran away with Ivetta and she grew tired of him—a man without an education, with few talents, deficient in English—he was afraid that he would find himself back at zero. He would lose even the few things that he had managed to accomplish.

At fourteen, in the gymnasium of the No. 4 High School, Kostya and his classmates, stripped to their underpants, had submitted to a series of physical tests administered by the head boxing trainer of the Omsk Spartak Athletics Club. The man had measured the length of their arms; checked with calipers the thickness of the skin below their eyebrows; had them execute the standing broad jump and a complex version of hopscotch. Then, to eliminate criers and bleeders, he had punched each boy in the nose. From a class of twenty boys, he had selected three. Kostya was one of them.



This was in 1975, one year before the Montreal Olympics. The trainer, widely known to be the son of an enemy of the people, had invited himself to Kostya's apartment to meet with his parents. In the communal kitchen, Kostya's mother served tea and condensed milk. The meeting was very formal, as though important business were being transacted. Kostya's trainer presented himself using his full name: Emil Osipovich Shtenberg.

"How would you like it," Emil asked, "if in five years your son was representing his country at the first Olympics to be held on Russian soil?"

"The boy's mother wants to know if he will be hurt," his father said.

"I would be a liar if I said he will not be hit, but you have my word he will not be hurt."

The discussion did not go much further.

"My wife and I have never been to Moscow," his father said.

"It is a marvellous city," Emil said. "I am sure you will enjoy it."

But although Kostya spent most of the next five years in the gym, his parents didn't get to go to Moscow. Since the Americans didn't go to Moscow, either, Emil said it was just as well. Any boxer who claimed to be an Olympic champion without facing any Americans was a fraud. With this in mind, Emil fixed his sights on the future. For the Los Angeles Olympics, Kostya would be twenty-three, which, in Emil's estimation, was the ideal age for a middleweight. And so Kostya persisted. Emil secured him a job at a furniture plant, whose director, a boxing supporter, made generous allowances for Kostya's training schedule. Kostya received the privileges afforded athletes: food coupons, a new tracksuit, occasional trips to cities in western Siberia and northern Kazakhstan. Over time, he also attained a degree of local recognition: girls smiled at him and men slapped him on the bac

By the winter of 1984, Kostya was th

HER CREED

I believe
in the creation of
the criminal,
the evil people,
my mother says on her eighty-third birthday,
everyone born is a miracle.
How did I know I would have YOU, she
cries out. "I don't know what *I* would have done
without *you*, Mom," I say. "I'd still
be out there, calling MA-ma, MA-ma!"
She laughs, with a delight that lies near
the center of her nature, now, near the start
of the end of her life. But she's worried about cloning—
"When they clone *you*, Mom," I tell her,
"I want one." *I'll put you on the list,* she says.
"I want the little kind, that I can
put in a high chair and feed Cream of Wheat to,"
I add, and she says, *I'll move your name*
up high on the list. Over and over,
these days, she tells me they never will be able
to make real flesh, in a dish—not flesh
with spirit. She tells me this once an hour—
my mother is going gaga so slowly
she makes it look like a natural return
to a state of grace. *Not real flesh,*
she assures me—the men cannot make happen
what happened in her body. When she dies, she wants to see
her father again, and put her arms
around her beloved husband. *Not a living*
cell with a soul. Oh—but Science,
she sighs, *you know—20,000*
Leagues Under the Sea! "Let's come back
and check on them," I propose. "On your birthday,
in the year 3000, I'll pick you up,
wherever you are, from wherever I am,
and we'll visit the earth." *What will you be driving?*
she asks. "Maybe I'll be riding on the back
of a snow goose," I tell my mother.
"I'll honk." *Shave and a haircut,* she says.
They will never make flesh.

—*Sharon Olds*

middleweight champion of Omsk. Then of western Siberia. To take the title, he beat a boy from Novosibirsk, opening a gash over his left eye and flooring him repeatedly with straight rights. After the referee stopped the fight, the boy sat on the canvas and wept. On the train back to Omsk, Emil admonished Kostya for showing too much sympathy.

"He can't go to his right," Kostya said, "and his mother has cancer of the pancreas."

"Whose mother doesn't have cancer of the pancreas?" Emil said.

"I don't see what's to celebrate."

"In life, anytime you win, celebrate."

In this sense, Emil had been right. That fight, it turned out, was the high point of Kostya's career. Soon afterward, he lost a split decision to a fighter from Chelyabinsk and once again failed to qualify for the national team. The fight had been close, but one of the judges had scored it overwhelmingly in his opponent's favor. When the announcement was made, the referee had had to restrain Emil from assaulting the judge.

According to Emil, politics had been at play. The authorities had not wanted to advance a fighter trained by the son of an enemy of the people. Fifty years earlier, before Emil was even born, Stalin had accused his father of Trotskyism and shipped him to Norilsk. Emil had been paying the price ever since. Now Kostya was being punished as well. The system was vile and corrupt, and it was only a small consolation when the Soviet Union boycotted the Los Angeles Olympics.

Under the strictest confidence, Emil told Kostya that he was finished with the Soviet Union.

"It so happens," Emil said, "my father was Jewish." Laughing, he added, "Hard to believe that this would bring me anything except more trouble."

A year later, Emil boarded a train and was gone. He promised Kostya a postcard from wherever it was that he landed. He promised to bring him over to the West, where his natural gifts would be rewarded. Kostya waited for the postcard, but it never came. Gradually, he deviated from his training regimen. He spent more time with friends from the furniture plant, went to the *banya*, drank a little, got involved with women. Occasionally, when he felt the urge in his back and shoulders, Kostya returned to the gym, but once there he felt like a guest. People recognized his face, but fewer and fewer remembered his name.

In this way, like everyone else, Kostya lived his life. He watched the Seoul Olympics on television and felt only a passing sense of regret. He remained at the furniture plant until it was purchased by a consortium of Germans and Swedes. Afterward, he took the kind of work available to him: physical labor, often outdoors. It was when he was working on a lumber crew, surrounded by men like himself—the anonymous many who were failing to prosper in the new Russia—that he received the letter from Emil. The envelope bore a Toronto address. In the letter, Emil apologized for not having written for six years, but offered to make good on his promise to bring Kostya to the free world. The letter included specific instructions and a check for nine hundred American dollars.

Twelve years later than planned, Kostya rode the train from Omsk to Moscow—only now his destination was not the Olympic Village but a travel agency. Partly because the Peruvians did not demand a visa, Kostya bought a plane ticket to Lima. He turned the remainder of his money over to an old woman who claimed to be Emil's aunt. She provided him with a pillow and a wool blanket and helped him push a coffee table against her living-room wall. Kostya stayed with her for three nights, until his flight departed for Peru. Most of the other passengers on the plane were Russian, and Kostya wondered how many of them had the same intentions he did. It seemed strange that so many Russians would want to go to Peru. To him, almost all of them looked suspicious. He assumed that he looked suspicious as well, and feared that one of the passengers or the stewardesses would denounce him. But when the plane set down for the connection in Gander, Newfoundland, Kostya was invited to exit along with everyone else.

To his surprise, everything happened just as Emil had written. He followed the line of passengers down a long hallway and found himself inside the terminal. He chose a chair in the remotest part of the concourse and went through the contents of his shoulder bag. At the very bottom he found his sneakers. Doing his best to casually conceal what he was doing, he peeled the insole off his right shoe and palmed the scrap of paper he had hidden there. Then he repacked his bag and walked the floor of the terminal until he saw what he was looking for. Standing near a newsstand was a woman in a uniform. Kostya did not know what the uniform signified, but it looked official. Willing himself forward, as though for the proverbial leap into cold water, Kostya approached the woman and read from the scrap of paper in his hand.

"Ya yem a refugee," Kostya said.

Subverting his every reasonable expectation, the woman responded in heavily accented Russian.

"You want refugee status?"

"Yes," Kostya said.

"Follow me," she instructed.

Kostya spent two weeks in the refugee shelter in Gander before he was claimed by Father Nikita, a Russian Orthodox priest who operated a halfway house for Russian refugees in Toronto. When he arrived at the house, Emil was there to greet him. That same night, Kostya moved into Emil's one-bedroom apartment in the north end of the city. The building was occupied mainly by Russians, flanked by other buildings occupied by other Russians. Many of these Russians were also Jews, though Kostya couldn't particularly tell the difference. On the main street, there were Russian delicatessens, Russian bookshops, Russian video stores, and even signs and posters in Russian tacked onto the bus shelters and telephone poles. At the nearby park and at the playground, Kostya heard as much Russian as English. For Kostya, the non-Russian world existed only in the various gyms where Emil took him for their workouts. But, even there, Kostya was rarely required to communicate in any but the crudest ways. He learned the English vocabulary of boxing: jab, cross, hook, slip, uppercut. Also useful was the word "O.K."

"While you were out, the staff whittled away your desk into a totem pole."

Not long after Kostya settled in, Emil drove him to meet their benefactor. They made the short trip in Emil's minivan, which he had been using for years to deliver pizza.

"Don't talk unless you have to," Emil said. "And, no matter what I say, don't contradict me."

The man they were to meet was Bomka Goldfarb. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Bomka had sold real estate in Toronto, but after the collapse he had returned to his native Kiev and made a fortune dealing in manganese. He was one of the richest Russian immigrants in Toronto.

Bomka designated the meeting not at his offices but at a new Russian restaurant in which he held a partial interest. The restaurant was minutes away from Emil's apartment, in a strip mall. It featured, Emil had heard, a massive fountain in the foyer.

The fountain, Bomka Goldfarb explained when he greeted them, was a reproduction of one he had seen in Rome. When he invested in the restaurant, it had been on the condition that it include such a fountain. The fountain was a marble sculpture. It reached almost to the ceiling and consisted of four fish supporting the torso of a powerfully built man. The man appeared to be either drinking from or blowing into a larg shell. To Kostya's eyes, the man's face bore a resemblance to Bomka Goldfarb's.

Bomka directed them to a table near a broad stage that boasted a gleaming white piano. He bade them wait, then returned several moments later accompanied by a thin, pinched-faced mar

"This," Bomka said, "is my partne

Zyama Karp. The restaurant is his vision."

Bomka took a seat at the table, though Zyama remained standing.

"Zyama," Bomka said, "you should be acquainted with these people. Konstantin Petrov, boxing champion, and his trainer, senior Soviet coach Emil Osipovich Shtenberg."

"A boxing champion?" Zyama asked.

"Very talented," Bomka said. "Emil came to me and said, 'How would you like to invest in a boxer?' I had been thinking about a racehorse. But Emil said, 'A boxer is cheaper and more interesting than a horse.' He'll be fighting at the Trump Plaza just as soon as we can get his immigration in order."

"Where were you a boxing champion?" Zyama asked.

"In Siberia," Emil said. "In 1984. He would have gone to Los Angeles, if not for the boycott."

"Must have been very disappointing for you," Zyama said.

"You cannot imagine," Emil said.

"I was talking to him," Zyama said.

"It was disappointing for both of us," Emil said.

"What's wrong with him? Can't he speak?"

"Of course he can speak," Emil said.

"When do you become more interesting than a horse?" Zyama asked.

"What horse?" Kostya said.

"I like a sense of humor," Zyama said.

The meeting ended with Bomka's renewed pledge to expedite Kostya's immigration process. He had top lawyers in his employ. They were extremely well connected. If asked, they could get asylum for Stalin, he said.

On the drive home, Emil was in very high spirits. More than once, he volunteered that he was pleased with the results of their meeting.

"You made a good impression," Emil said.

"Why did you say I was a champion?"

"It's a word someone like Bomka Goldfarb understands."

"He'll be disappointed. I'm not the fighter I was six years ago," Kostya said.

"You're better than you think," Emil said. "Most American boxers aren't fit to tie your boots."

"But if you had written me six years ago," Kostya said.

"Six years ago I was delivering pizzas. And when I wasn't delivering pizzas I was guarding the lobby of a condominium. So what was I supposed to write you? 'Dear Kostya, I have no money. The boxing establishment treats me like a nuisance. Nobody here cares if I live or die'? What would you have done with this kind of letter?"

Kostya thought that he would have liked such a letter. It wouldn't have changed anything, but, thinking about the letter, he could see it on the tidy kitchen table where his mother would have left it. He could see himself, in the evening, after the factory, sitting with the letter in his hands. He imagined himself in that past. It was good to hear from Emil, to read about his troubles. It was good to think that, in a distant country, he had a friend who remembered him.

Ivetta had never met Emil, but she had an opinion of him. She also had an opinion of Bomka Goldfarb and Skinny Zyama. It angered her that such people would deceive Kostya, and it angered her that he would allow himself to be deceived.

"Bomka gave assurances and the lawyers gave assurances. Emil trusted them and I trusted Emil," Kostya said.

"Who in their right mind would trust a person like Bomka Goldfarb?"

"He paid Emil to bring me over. He sent a check each month for rent and expenses. We thought, Why would he do that if he wasn't serious?"

"Last month, I bought a pair of shoes. Even at the store, I wasn't sure I wanted them. But they were only sixty dollars. I wore them once. Long enough to become bored with them. Now they're in the back of my closet."

"It's true," Kostya said. "It's always good if you can afford to buy."

But if you couldn't afford to buy, things were different. And the nature of the difference could not be explained to someone like Ivetta, who had forgotten what it was like to be deprived. Ivetta would say that there are always choices, but after a certain point—even when looking back—Kostya could not see the choices. Would he have been better off in Siberia if he had declined Emil's offer? Should he have returned to Moscow with Emil? Could these be considered legitimate choices? To his way of thinking, confronted by the available options, he had always just pursued the least unpromising.

The same applied to Bomka Goldfarb. Both he and Emil had been subject to Bomka's whims. Given the circumstances, what were their alternatives? Bomka had told them to sign papers, and so Kostya had signed papers. Bomka had told them to wait, and so they had waited. Occasionally, Emil made phone calls to ascertain the progress. He made the calls from behind his closed bedroom door, but the apartment was not large and the door was hardly soundproof. First, Emil had called the lawyers. Later, he had called an associate of Bomka Goldfarb's. Then, when the associate became unreachable, Emil left messages with a secretary.

To placate Kostya, Emil posed a rhetorical question: If Bomka has forgotten about us, why are we still getting monthly checks?

The delay was understandable. Lawyers were notoriously slow. And who could compete with immigration officials—bureaucrats—when it came to laziness and inefficiency?

Emil counselled patience, but he paid a promoter to get Kostya on the undercard of a show in Windsor. This he considered money well spent—many of the fighters on the card would be Americans, and the whole thing would be broadcast on television in Windsor and Detroit. Also, the promoter had given his word that he would pit Kostya against a young fighter, a Golden Gloves champion, handled by smart people, expected to go far. But, most important, the show would allow Bomka to see with his own eyes the value he was getting for his money.

The fight was scheduled for the February of a cold winter. To get to Bomka, Emil parked near his mansion and spent the predawn hours wrapped in blankets, sitting in the van. When Bomka left for work, Emil tailed him to his office. He waited an appropriate half hour and then went in, bringing with him a box of chocolates for the secretary. When he recounted the story for Kostya, he stressed that Bomka had been very glad to see him—and particularly glad about the imminent boxing match in Windsor. So glad, in fact, that, to undertake the journey, he planned to hire one limousine for himself, his wife, his kids, and Skinny Zyama and a second limousine solely for Emil and Kostya.

"I hope you refused the limousine," Kostya said.

"You don't want the limousine?"

"Someone who hasn't won a fight in six years shouldn't arrive in a limousine."

"To be honest," Emil said, "I don't entirely disagree, but this isn't something I could have explained to Bomka Goldfarb. Here's what I suggest: if it bothers you, ignore it's a limousine. Pretend it's the van."

But the limousine, a black stretch Cadillac, was not easy to ignore. As soon as they climbed inside, the driver drew their attention to the bar, the television, the VCR, the selection of Russian videos, and the refrigerator stocked with smoked meats and caviar. Everything compliments of Bomka Goldfarb.

"He has a fight today. No food. No alcohol. No distractions," Emil said.

"Too bad," the driver said.

"That's the way it is," Emil said.

"It's four hours to Windsor," the driver said. "A long time to stare out the window at nothing."

"Élite athletes must be focussed," Emil said.

"No doubt," the driver said. "I was never an élite athlete myself, but I know something about it. My daughter is a dancer and my ex-wife was a prima ballerina. Danced with Baryshnikov."

"Very interesting," Emil said.

"Boxer," the driver said, "if you get bored staring out the window, say the word, I'll tell you my life story."

Eventually, Kostya heard his story, though not before he and Emil arrived at the Bavaria Club in Windsor—a low, two-story building with a wooden roof and white stucco walls. From the parking lot, it resembled a restaurant or a modest hotel. Obeying signs and arrows, Emil and Kostya found the Sports Hall; there they discovered a ring encircled by several rows of metal folding chairs and a handful of people—easily identified as other fighters and trainers waiting for the weigh-in. The promoter saw Emil coming and, despite the look on Emil's face, extended his hand and smiled. Emil leaned into the promoter's face, ignoring his outstretched hand, and started shouting—mainly in English but partly in Russian. Kostya understood only the Russian, a collection of obscenities bred of the prison camps and the Army.

After Emil finished his tirade, he stalked back to Kostya.

"We could call Bomka," Kostya said. "Say the fight is cancelled."

"No use," Emil said. "We're fucked."

In a limousine somewhere between Toronto and Windsor, Bomka, his wife, his two sons, and Skinny Zyama were eating and drinking the things that Kostya and Emil had denied themselves. Kostya imagined them dressed for a casino but installed on the metal folding chairs, in a half-empty room decorated with German banners and dingy photographs of the German countryside.

"What do you want to do?" Kostya asked.

"We came here to fight, we fight," Emil said.

Fourth on the undercard, Kostya fought. His opponent—no Golden Gloves champion—was a grim, heavily muscled black fighter who, in place of satin trunks and boxing boots, wore Army-surplus shorts and basketball shoes. Outside the ring, with a weapon, he would have been the sort of man Kostya would have been happy to avoid, but inside the ring he was plodding and mechanical. Had he cared about the promoter or the spectators, Kostya might have tried to carry the fight into the second round. But there was nobody to impress. Bomka's wife had taken one step inside the Sports Hall, paused, spoken three words, and then she, Bomka, and the children had disappeared. Only Skinny Zyama remained, and so he was able to watch Kostya joylessly punish the black fighter to the body and then stop him with a left hook to the temple.

Afterward, by way of congratulations, Skinny Zyama handed Kostya a Russian Riviera matchbook.

"Call if you want a job," he said.

In the summer of 1974, Mikhail Baryshnikov defected in Toronto. In 1978, at the Joint Distribution office in Rome, Luda Sorkin brandished the letter that Baryshnikov had written to her. The letter was not long, but in it Baryshnikov devoted an entire paragraph to Toronto. A little provincial, perhaps, Baryshnikov mused, but a good place to start a ballet school.

"At the Riga Ballet, I danced with Baryshnikov," Luda Sorkin informed the caseworker.

Luda Sorkin displayed this same letter when the family met with a diplomat at the Canadian Embassy, on Via Zara; she showed it to her remedial-English instructor at George Brown College, having had it translated shortly after the family arrived in Toronto, and when she applied for a small-business loan from the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services she carried the letter, her diploma, and a Latvian newspaper clipping that included a photograph of herself dancing with Baryshnikov.

Seated at the bar of the Russian Riviera, Volodya Sorkin told Kostya, "There wasn't enough room in the marriage for the three of us."

"You, her, and Baryshnikov?" Kostya asked.

"Me, her, and the letter," Volodya said.

Volodya was a regular at the Russian Riviera. On nights when his limousine wasn't booked, he stopped in to catch Ivetta's performance in the Vegas-style floor show. Before the show, he nursed a drink and talked to whoever was around—mostly to Kostya, who had little to do but sit at the bar. Fights and confrontations were uncommon. The clientele at the Russian Riviera was predominantly middle-aged, educated, and relatively well off. Also, it was Jewish. In this respect, Kostya discerned a cultural difference between Russians and Jews: on the rare occasion when there was trouble, nobody pulled a knife.

Through Volodya, Kostya became acquainted with Ivetta. Until then, Kostya hadn't had much interaction with the dancers and musicians, who socialized mainly with one another, but he had taken notice of Ivetta. Not because of some striking physical attribute—with the costumes and the makeup, all the dancers looked like variations on the same woman—but because she possessed a quality that Kostya had observed in the best athletes: she gave the impression of effortlessness. It was the illusion that the forces of time and gravity did not apply equally to all people.

Her face and neck still flushed with the charge of the performance, Ivetta slid in beside her father at the bar. She kissed Volodya affectionately, and seemed to take no notice of Kostya until Volodya turned inclusively in his direction.

"This is my good friend Kostya," Volodya said.

"Very nice to meet you, Kostya," Ivetta said.

"Kostya is a boxer," Volodya said.

"Was a boxer," Kostya said.

"Not anymore?" Ivetta asked.

"I wouldn't say so."

"When were you a boxer?" Ivetta asked.

"It depends who you ask," Kostya said.

"I asked you."

"Then I would say six years ago."

"And if I asked someone else?"

"Then they might say two weeks ago."

Ivetta fell silent, arched her neck, and studied him. She seemed to be contemplating something, but Kostya couldn't imagine what. The expression on her face made Kostya wonder if she had misheard what he had said. It was possible, maybe because of the noise in the restaurant, that she had heard not the words he said but instead some strange words that sounded like them. Kostya thought to repeat himself but reconsidered. Instead, he told her that he had seen her dance.

"She's the star," Volodya said.

"She's very good."

"Nice of you to say," Ivetta said.

"If I could move like you, I would still be boxing."

On subsequent nights, even when Volodya wasn't there, Ivetta took to joining Kostya at the bar. At first, she did so seemingly without intention. After the show, she would pass by the bar, evidently on her way somewhere else, and discover Kostya—unexpectedly, as if for the first time. Later, the pretense was dropped.

Initially, their conversations centered on Kostya's boxing and his life in Siberia. Ivetta seemed interested in things that Kostya found mundane, if not embarrassing—the details of the furniture plant, his boxing trials with Emil, his empty years after the fall of Communism. In time, Ivetta spoke about her life with her mother and her own ambitions.

"I dance here to make my father happy," Ivetta said. "Unlike some of the other dancers, I don't have any fantasies."

Ivetta had been nine when her family came to Toronto and sixteen when her parents divorced. In Riga, Volodya had been a civil engineer, but in Toronto he could not find a job in line with his qualifications. Instead, he had worked for years as a taxi-driver to support the family while Ivetta's mother tried to establish her ballet school. Once the school was established, she discarded him. Volodya was no longer the man she'd married, she said. She had married an intellectual; now she lived with a cabdriver.

The divorce had been bitter, and her parents did not stay in contact. Once a week, Ivetta visited her father in his apartment and made him dinner. Then, there were the nights when he saw her dance at the restaurant. Her mother, a purist, despised the Russian Riviera, and the idea that her daughter, classically trained and destined for greater things, would degrade herself by dancing there.

Even before Ivetta went home with Kostya, people had started to comment.

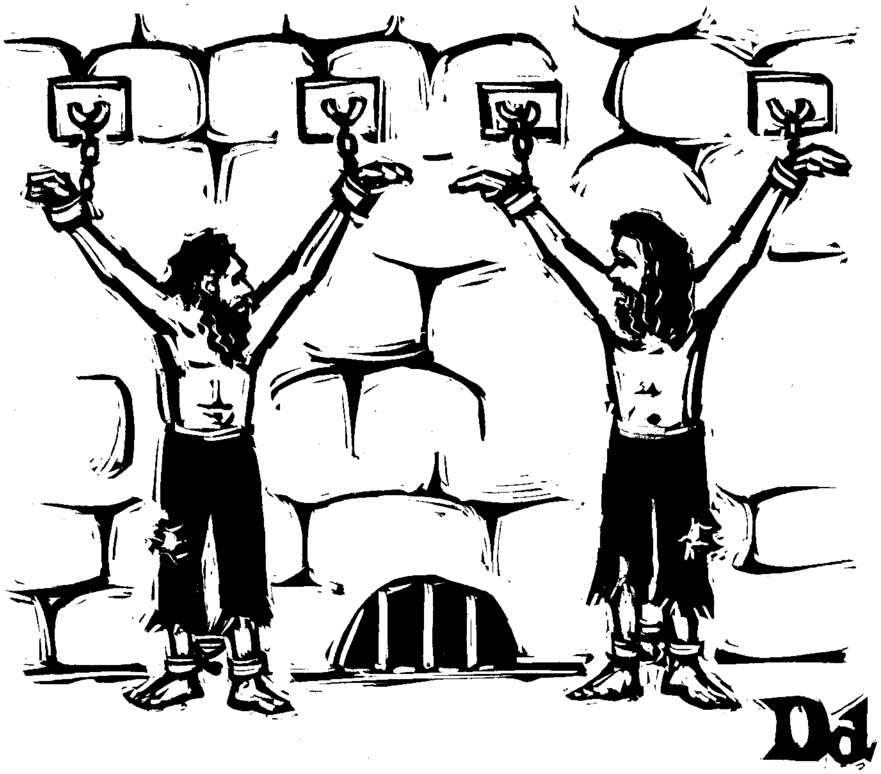
To each of them, independently, Volodya said, "I hope you know what you're doing."

Passing them at the bar, Skinny Zyama said, "Don't get her pregnant. It will kill my show."

The night that Ivetta finally went home with Kostya, they left the restaurant in separate cars. Kostya drove ahead in Emil's van and Ivetta followed in a new Nissan Maxima. In the parking lot, Kostya felt the impulse to apologize for his car and, in the apartment, he wanted to apologize again. Clearly, she was used to better. He hadn't changed anything in the apartment since Emil had left for Moscow. He had never belonged in Canada, Emil had told Kostya, and he'd felt, every day, an exile. A man in his fifties should not come to a strange land, not knowing the language, absent connections, and expect to thrive. He had abandoned his homeland because of a pernicious system, but now that the system had been overthrown he would return. The borders were open. Russia was replete with talent. A Russian fighter could now ply his trade all over the world—in Europe, in America, in Australia. In Moscow, Emil could restore his reputation.

"Keep everything, including the van," Emil had said. "The ministry mails the registration renewal in October. They have it organized by birth month. Mail them a check and send me a birthday card."

Kostya slept on the same mattress that Emil had salvaged years before from Goodwill. His furniture consisted of a



"You're right, now is not the ideal time for you. But you've got to admit that there's never really a perfect time to have children."

• •

metal-and-Formica kitchen table, with mismatching pine chairs; a faded gray velour couch; a coffee table with a scored glass top; and a large Zenith television set in a wooden console. But Ivetta didn't complain. Even as she spent increasingly more time in the apartment, she never once suggested that Kostya replace the table or the bed. They settled into a routine: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, after the Russian Riviera, they drove to the apartment in their separate cars. On the other nights, Ivetta slept at her mother's house. When Ivetta's mother confronted her, Ivetta fled to Kostya's apartment in tears. She threw herself onto his bed and bawled. She stayed like that for a long time, her back shuddering. When Kostya laid his hand on her, Ivetta related the painful details of her argument with Luda. Her mother had said cruel, shameless things. Ivetta increased her sobbing when she told him the worst of them.

"At least your father was something before he became nothing," Luda had said, "but you, you're starting with nothing."

On Saturday, at eight o'clock, in among the arriving guests, Kostya spotted the face of the larger gangster and then that of his smaller companion. Kostya watched them drift from the door to the fountain. At the bar, the larger one settled in to Kostya's right and his friend took the next seat over. After nodding to Kostya, the larger gangster asked the bartender for two Cognacs, and, when each snifter had been filled, he made no move to pay.

"We're guests of Zyama Karp's," he said.

The bartender glanced at Kostya.

"It's fine," Kostya said.

"Where is your boss?" the gangster asked.

"Around," Kostya said.

"Tell him we're here."

Kostya rose from his seat and walked the length of the bar to Skinny Zyama's office. As he passed the gangsters, he remarked that they were both wearing the same suits as before. The smaller gangster was seated on his barstool with his legs bent, and Kostya could see holes in his socks, exposing white, hairless skin.

Kostya found Zyama standing before a full-length mirror, adjusting his suspenders and straightening his bow tie. His shoes were poised beside his desk and his tuxedo jacket was draped over the back of his admiral's chair.

Turning from the mirror, Zyama eyed Kostya.

"Fix your tie," Zyama said.

Kostya fingered the knot of his tie and gave it a superficial tug.

"The gangsters are here," he said.

"What gangsters?"

"The New Jersey gangsters."

"What are they doing?"

"Drinking at the bar."

"Sons of bitches."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Get rid of them," Zyama said. "Just don't make a scene."

On his way back, Kostya paused to transfer a set of brass knuckles from his breast pocket to his left trouser pocket. Typically, he did not carry them. Any problem he could not solve with his bare fists was likely a problem he could not solve. But, in this instance, he had brought the brass knuckles as a limited precaution. He felt their weight against his thigh, and checked to be sure that their outline was not visible through the fabric.

At the bar, the larger gangster was smoking a cigarette and surveying the foyer and the dining room. He watched Kostya's approach.

"You told him?" he asked.

"You should finish your drinks and leave," Kostya said.

"Is that what he said?"

"No. He just said leave."

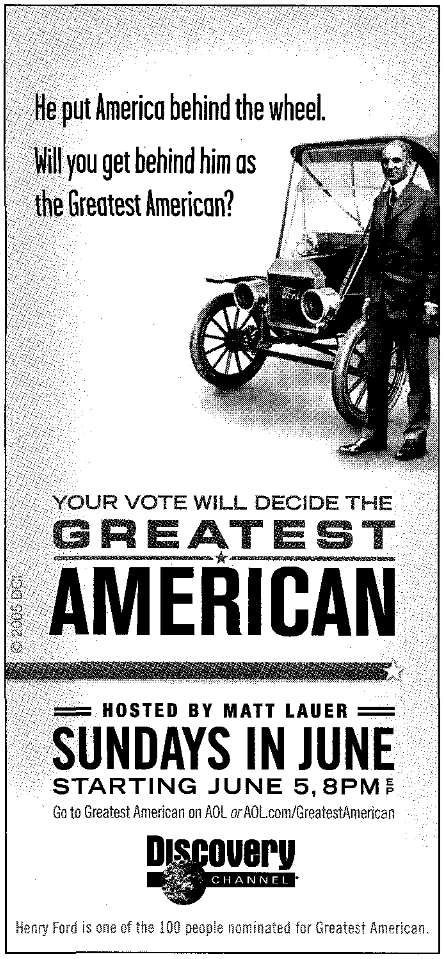
"He's making a big mistake."

"Someone is," Kostya said.

"Maybe even you," the gangster said.

He smiled and remained on his stool, flaunting his ease. Whatever would happen would not happen just yet, Kostya sensed. The initial crush of guests were then assembling in the foyer—a collection of witnesses and complications.

Kostya left the bar and took up his position by the door, where he oversaw the familiar procession. Moguls in designer suits—their fortunes amassed in the wake of the Soviet collapse—parked their Bentleys, BMWs, and Mercedeses and ascended the steps with their bejewelled wives. Lesser businessmen and professionals—there to celebrate birthdays and significant anniversaries—trooped from Hondas and Toyotas carrying flower arrangements, cake boxes, and bottles of vodka. Amid the disorder of coats, and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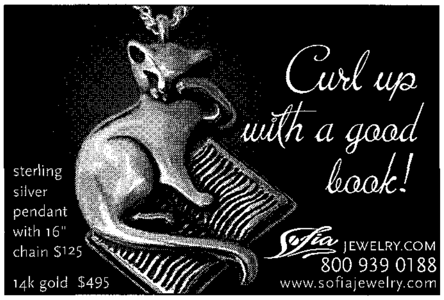
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the near-suffocating fog of rival perfumes and colognes, Kostya spied Ivetta and Ivetta as she would look in twenty years—both Ivettas looked elegant and unhappy. As they neared Kostya, they became more unhappy. With them were an old man and an old woman—Ivetta's grandparents. Her grandfather was clean-shaven, with a full head of white hair. He wore a brown suit and, for his age, moved precisely and energetically. Her grandmother, unlike most women her age, had hair that was neither dyed nor cut. Instead, it was gathered in a gray bun. She wore a colorful shawl over an Oriental-looking dress and held her husband's arm. When Luda addressed Kostya, the woman waited patiently.

"So you're him?" Luda said.

Before he could answer, Luda turned to Ivetta.

"Is this him?"

"Yes."

"Where are your manners? Why don't you introduce us?"

Painfully, Ivetta made the introductions.

"Mother, Kostya. Kostya, my mother."

"Why so formal?" Luda asked. "We may be in-laws. We should embrace."

That said, neither she nor Kostya inclined to embrace.

"Who is he?" Ivetta's grandfather asked.

"Ivetta's boyfriend," Luda told him.

"We invited him?" the grandfather asked.

"He works here."

"Is that so?"

"He's the doorman," Luda said.

"The doorman?"

"Yes."

"Does it pay well?" the grandfather asked.

"All right," Kostya said.

"Cash?"

"Yes."

"By the hour?

"A flat sum for the night."

"What about tips?" the grandfather asked.

"Not usually."

"You live in a house or an apartment?"

"An apartment."

"Where?"

"Antibes."

"We used to live there. How many bedrooms?"

"One."

"What do you pay in rent?"

"Seven hundred dollars," Kostya said.

"Expensive. You should save up, get a house."

As her family proceeded into the dining room, Ivetta lagged momentarily behind. While he had been answering her grandfather's questions, Kostya had watched her face darken with hostility. He had seen her look this way before only in relation to her mother, but, at some level, he had always expected that she would one day direct this look at him. A person has only so many faces—the face you show an enemy you will one day show a friend. But knowing this still had not prepared him for the severity of Ivetta's contempt.

Keeping a sterile distance from him, she said, "How could you do this to me?"

She spoke loudly enough to cause people nearby to turn their heads. In private, Kostya thought that he might have been able to contend with Ivetta's anger, but in public he felt inhibited by shame.

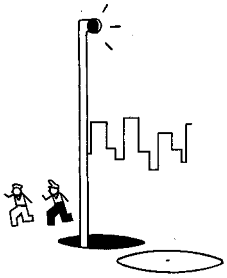
"I only asked for one thing," Ivetta said.

"If it was possible, I would have done it," Kostya said.

"Do you care about me at all?"

"Yes," Kostya said.

"No. If you cared about me, you would never have let this happen."



With a cool finality, Ivetta pivoted on her heel and stranded Kostya in the foyer. He watched as she made her way across the floor and into the dining room to join her family. For the first time, he felt a desire to hurt her. He had never done it before, had never hit Ivetta or anyone, man or woman, in anger, but at that instant there was a pressure in his hands and his shoulder blades that wanted release. If he had been asked to describe the pressure, he would have said that it amounted to the phrase, repeated, "Who needs this?" If he had been able to step outside or find a quiet corner, Kostya thought that he could contain the feeling. If he could blind himself to Ivetta's presence in the dining room, to the people jostling him, to the gangsters at the bar, he could arrive at a solution. Only a few steps and he could be outside, where he could breathe and think. But as he pressed toward the door he saw the larger gangster waving to him, a leer on his square face, and Kostya did not resist.

"That's some girl," the gangster said.

Without answering, Kostya reclaimed his seat at the bar.

"A good figure and a temper. The sort that likes it rough. Gets down like a dog, begs to be slapped around."

The guests were all in the dining room now, sitting down to their excess of appetizers. Soon, the band would start up. Lyona Ostricker would assume the stage and sing Russian classics and then coarsen his voice and do an imitation of a famous black jazz singer. Guests would toast the objects of their celebrations. Bow-tied waiters would deliver the first course. The dance floor would fill and the band would play Russian and American disco.

"This isn't going to end well," Kostya said.

"For who?" the gangster asked.

"Good question."

"It doesn't have to be this way," the gangster said.

"It does if you stay," Kostya said.

At the far end of the dining room, near the stage, Kostya saw Skinny Zyama holding court at his usual table. Guests and acquaintances stopped by to pay their respects. The choreographer, a woman twenty years his junior, kept him company.

"You don't expect us to leave without seeing the famous show?" the gangster said.

"The show is an hour away," Kostya said.

"We came this far—we'll wait," the gangster said.

Kostya regarded the smaller gangster. He sat coiled and seething, his eyes feverish. For the duration of the hour, until the show began, he held the same position. But when the lights dimmed, the dance floor cleared, and the prelude for the spectacle began, he started to shift in his chair. And when the dancers—Ivetta included—assumed the stage for the "Fiddler on the Roof" number, the smaller gangster lowered himself from his seat and made for the men's room. Without a word, the larger gangster followed.

The floor show normally lasted half an hour. The intermittent changes the choreographer imposed never altered its length. After "Fiddler on the Roof," there was a number in which the dancers leaped across the stage dressed like cats; then there was a scene from "Swan Lake"; then a song called "Cabaret," for which Ivetta was the lead. Kostya had seen this incarnation of the show at least thirty times and had memorized its rhythms to the extent that he could hear the words and visualize the steps before they were executed. And he knew that after the end of "Fiddler on the Roof" there remained more than twenty minutes in the show.

Quietly, suppressing the desire to hurry, Kostya crossed the length of the foyer to the men's room. On the way, he placed his left hand in his pocket and slipped his fingers into the brass knuckles. With his other hand he pushed open the heavy men's-room door. To the right were eight tall porcelain urinals. To the left was a long expanse of black marble floor and six white marble basins on nickel pedestals. The walls were covered with gilt-framed mirrors, and by the door were two brass tubs—one filled with fresh linen towels and the other with a pile of the same towels, already soiled. Opposite the basins were four ceiling-high toilet stalls—slabs of black marble with nickel-plated doors. The room was spotless and silent. Kostya listened for some indication of the gangsters. Then, using his knee, he tested the stall doors. The first two swung open, but the third held fast. At the disturbance, a voice belonging to the larger gangster said, "Occupied." Kostya jostled the door again.

"Fuck off," the gangster said.

Gauging his distance, Kostya reared back and slammed his heel against the door. The bolt gave way, and the door flung inward to reveal the two gangsters. The smaller one was seated on the toilet, and the larger gangster squatted in front of him. It took Kostya a moment to decipher what they were doing. The smaller gangster had his jacket off and one of his shirtsleeves rolled up. A belt was cinched at his biceps and a syringe protruded from his forearm. From what Kostya could tell, the man did not look conscious.

From his position on the floor, the larger gangster gave Kostya a look of animal hatred.

"My brother is sick," he said.

An instant later, he sprang up. Kostya moved reflexively, slipped to his left, shifted his weight, and threw an uppercut that caught the gangster's jaw. He felt the force of the blow through the brass knuckles and into his shoulder. He could not remember when he had hit anyone as hard, and he felt a shiver of pleasure descend through his knees. The gangster tottered to one side, bumped against the stall, and then pitched backward onto the floor. There was blood on his face and shirt collar and a spreading pool, oily black, on the dark surface of the marble.

For a time, the only sound in the room was breathing. Kostya heard his own, the rasping of the beaten gangster, and the slow, nasal exhalations of the smaller gangster, slumped against the toilet tank. Kostya tried to settle his pulse and clear his mind. Both men were breathing; they would live. Kostya had contained the mess to the bathroom, and if he acted quickly he could summon Skinny Zyama, remove the gangsters, and clean up without disturbing the guests. Nobody could accuse him of having failed to do his job, but Kostya derived little contentment from this. The job was something he no longer wanted. The thought of pleasing Skinny Zyama or of sitting at the bar to watch Ivetta dance another night seemed unendurable. It occurred to Kostya that he could leave the gangsters to be discovered by Skinny Zyama or someone else. He could walk away. While the show was still on, he could leave without attracting attention. He could find another apartment and another job no worse than this one. It did not need to be difficult.

Kostya took a moment to compose himself. He examined his hands and saw blood. But before he could consult the mirror he heard movement at the men's-room door. Kostya blocked it with his foot.

"Busy cleaning. Use the women's room," he said.

"The hell I will," the man replied, and kept pushing.

Kostya slipped his fingers back into the brass knuckles before he released the door and Ivetta's grandfather forced his way in.

"There's been an accident," Kostya said.

"I can see that," Ivetta's grandfather said.

The old man bent and examined the gangster's broken face.

"It only looks bad," Kostya said.

"I was at the front. I've seen bad."

He walked over to the smaller gangster and placed a hand on his chest.

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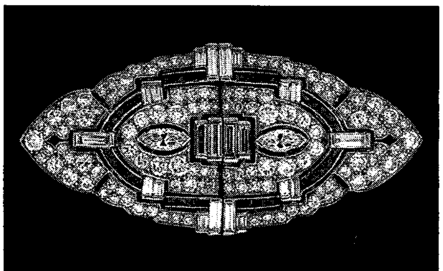

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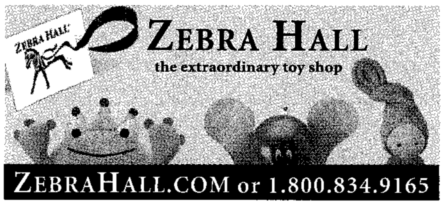

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"Still beating," the grandfather said.

The old man then stepped into the neighboring stall and urinated. When he'd finished, he moistened a towel in the sink and handed it to Kostya.

"There's blood on your face," the old man said.

"It's his," Kostya said.

"He needs an ambulance," the old man said.

"If you think so," Kostya said.

The music for the "Cabaret" song flowed into the washroom when the old man opened the door. As the door swung shut, Kostya's thoughts turned to his own grandfather. He had died when Kostya was still young, but Kostya could recall sitting with him as he related stories of the Great Patriotic War. A German grenade had taken three fingers off his left hand. On the back of the hand he had the date and place of the battle tattooed in green ink. At that time, reminders of the war were everywhere. There were tributes and parades to honor the veterans. Movie theatres showed documentaries and heroic epics. In the streets and back lots, Kostya pretended with his friends that they were the Red Army on the attack. To cries of "Forward, Comrades!," they rose from culverts and trenches and charged across the steppe, rifles pointed, greatcoats flapping. Kostya hadn't thought about any of this in years.

Distracted, Kostya failed to notice that the smaller gangster had begun to stir until the man half-raised himself from the toilet and blinked somnolently.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"The Russian Riviera," Kostya replied.

He watched with a measure of sympathetic curiosity as the gangster's eyes scanned the room, absorbing the details: the broken door, the blood, his brother's disfigured face. Kostya expected the gangster to collapse again momentarily. He stood with his arms spread in the stall, his elbows locked, his torso canted forward. He looked like a fighter who had got up when he should have stayed down, whose pride and courage would be rewarded only with a harsher beating. He lifted his eyes to Kostya, as if seeing him for the first time.

"How did I get here?" the gangster asked.

"I don't know," Kostya said.

"How do I get out of here?"

"I don't know that either." ♦

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WHO IS THE
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by Edward Koch, former Mayor of New York City and United States Congressman

I'd have to choose the man who, in my career, has been my greatest mentor. For me, that would be Harry Truman whom I see as the greatest American.

He was an ordinary man who rose to an extraordinary occasion. As he rose to that occasion, he performed as President in a brilliant way. When you check the place that he holds among Americans when they're asked to rate the greatest Presidents, he's way up there, whereas he was not for many, many years.

Look at his willingness to make decisions—using the atomic bomb to prevent American soldier casualties with respect to Japan. This, to me, was an extraordinary decision. I think he did the right thing, but it had to be gut-wrenching. For me, making decisions in a responsible way is the mark of leadership.

As Mayor of New York City, my greatest challenge was to make such decisions. It's not comparable to what he did, but one example was the New York City subway strike of 1980. It took a willingness on my part to take on the forces arrayed against the city government—namely the Transit Workers Union and others in the city who wanted to sell out to the union. I prevented that and made a decision to stand up, keep the city going, and not give in over the eleven days of the strike. In most of the decisions that I made as mayor, I would be looking to this great American, Harry Truman, for insight and courage.

You could never accuse Truman of having a brilliant command of rhetoric, especially coming after Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He found it difficult to even read because of eye impairment, so his voice tended to be a monotone.

Almost everyone remembers his letter to the opera critic who panned Margaret Truman's singing voice: Truman threatened to punch the man in the nose if he saw him on the street. I loved that. It showed not only his willingness to stand up and take appropriate action, but also the love of a father for his daughter. I thought it was wonderful.

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

CARPE NOCTEM

A little night history.

BY ARTHUR KRYSTAL

A man has written a book about the night. Well, why not? In the past decade or so, we've seen books on pencils, bookshelves, tobacco, cod, salt, spice, blood, bread, caffeine, crying, the penis, the breast, boredom, smiling, the hand, and masturbation. (Do the last six items seem to nudge one another?) Eventually, such books, and others like them, will all come to dust, including the two so far on dust itself, but before they do we might ask ourselves if this expenditure of print on the obvious and quotidian constitutes anything like a trend, or even a cultural shift.

These longish narratives, after all, deal with subjects that an English man of letters in 1820 might have devoted, at best, a dozen pages to. While grand abstractions (beauty, genius, the sublime) often produced long word counts, the smaller, more familiar aspects of life (vulgarity, idleness, getting up on cold mornings) were the domain of miniaturists like Lamb, Hazlitt, Stevenson, and, closer to our own day, Logan Pearsall Smith, or Cyril Connolly in one of his lighter moods. The thought that such matters required ventilating at book length would never have occurred to writers, much less publishers.

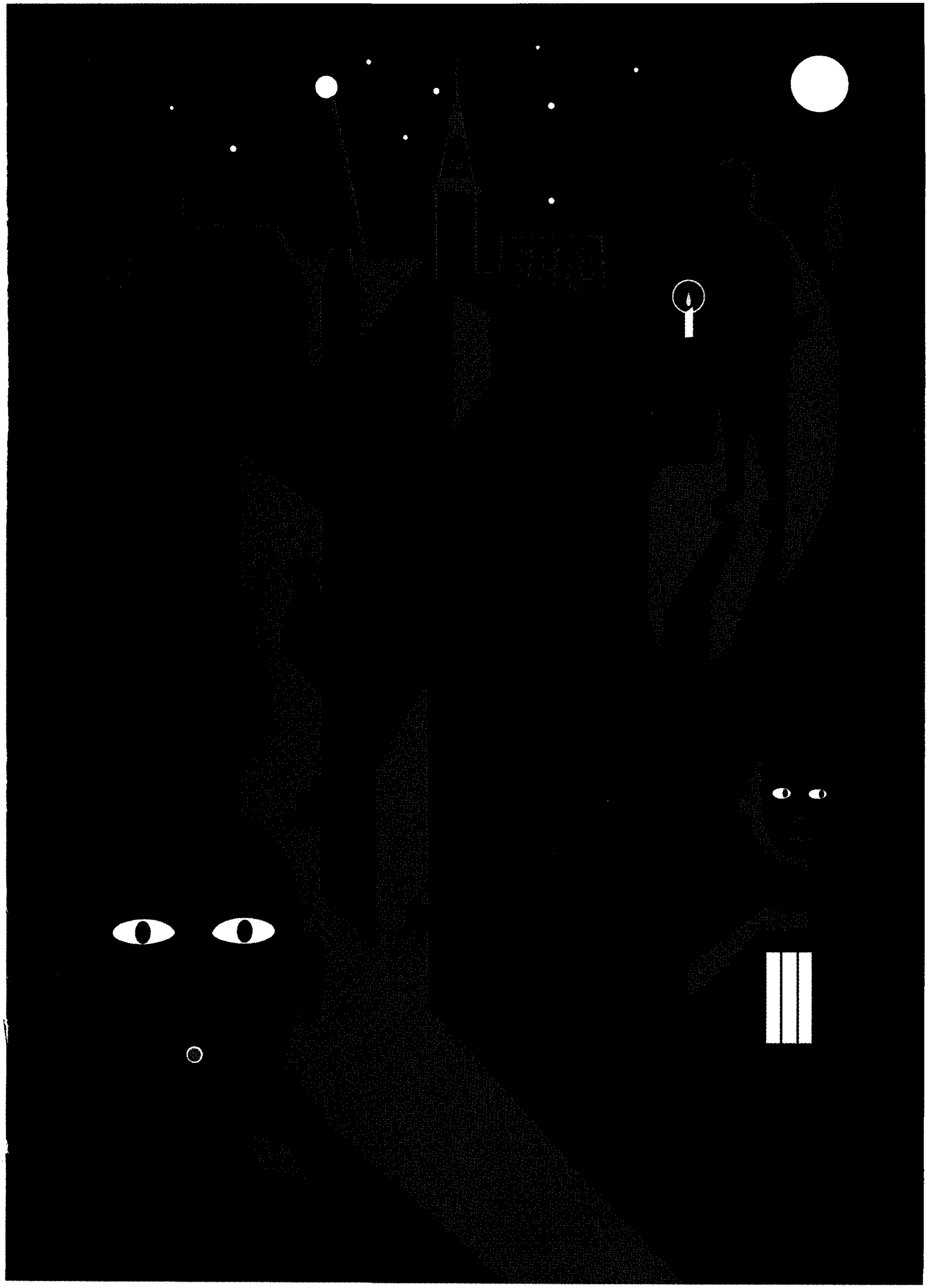
If it seems that any noun in the dictionary can be tricked out as a book these days, it's because the minutiae of daily life have acquired some intellectual capital. Good microhistories do brisk business because they see the big picture in the smallest details, offering the hope that everything under the sun has meaning. So, whatever was formerly neglected, or looked at but not really seen—utensils, foodstuffs, or the hemp that was used to make the ladders that enabled enemies to scale the walls that housed a king—now demands the academy's respect and scrutiny.

It follows, then, as the night the day, that the night should have its own day. In fact, it's surprising that it's taken this long. One reason for the delay may be that A. Roger Ekirch, who teaches Early American history at Virginia Tech, took twenty years to research and write "At Day's Close: Night in Times Past" (Norton; $25.95). Ekirch, if the Notes at the back of the book are any indication, has consulted what look to be a thousand and one sources, many of which puncture Thomas Middleton's elegant rendering of the night as fit for "no occupation but sleepe, feed, and fart." For Ekirch, the night—even before public lighting, mass transportation, and the introduction of official police forces changed it forever—has been a hubbub of activity, a sequence of comings and goings, a bustling fiefdom with its own distinct customs and rituals.

Today, those who live far from the tips of the earth, where it is continuous night half the year, rarely find themselves in the dark. Unless you're hacking your way through jungle or humping along in the desert, some form of artificial lighting, either a light bulb or an L.E.D. (light-emitting diode), is sure to be nearby. Electric light is so much a staple of modern life that we forget that there are people around whose parents relied on only two sources of light: the sun and fire. Thomas Edison's bright idea of 1879 notwithstanding, many homes, until the second or third decade of the twentieth century, were lit by small flames burning in gas lamps. In terms of radiant power, then, the Dark Ages lasted a lot longer than you may have thought.

How dark was it? Let's put it this way: an electric current coursing through a tungsten filament in a small glass vacuum produces a hundred times the light emitted by a candle or oil lamp. And, considering that no European cities deployed any kind of public lighting before 1650, the world at night was no place to take a stroll. Moonless nights presented a darkness so complete that anyone bold enough to step into Shakespeare's "vast sin-concealing chaos" was at risk of losing his footing, his purse, and his life. Carriages tumbled into ditches; houses were broken into or set on fire; and town squares filled up with beggars, prostitutes, crooks, and the crooked. In many cities, gangs roamed the streets. In 1606, a gangbanger by the name of Caravaggio killed a rival in Rome and fled to Naples. In London, young rakes, with such high-sounding names as the Scowrers, the Mohocks, and the Hectors, staked out territory and busted heads. (It's the street gang, not the noble Trojan, to which we owe the verb "to hector.") As Ekirch sees it, the night was "a forbidding place plagued by pestilential vapors, diabolical spirits, natural calamity, and human depravity." No wonder that an Italian proverb admonished, "Who goes out at night looks for a beating."

But people did go out, and they did so despite the warnings of the Church and city councils. Come dusk bells were rung, horns were blown and drums were beaten; city gates were shut, drawbridges raised, and stragglers forced to scurry home to light candles and tend the hearth. In medieval France, and throughout Europe, strict curfews were imposed. Around eight or nine in the evening, a bell sounded to indicate the *couvre-feu*, or putting out of fires,



Before the era of public lighting, night was pitch-black and rife with danger; Shakespeare called it a "vast sin-concealing chaos."

DO YOU SMELL SOMETHING?

from which the word "curfew" derives.

To make the night even less hospitable, city officials saw to it that chains and logs blocked off major thoroughfares, and that crimes committed after curfew met with stiff penalties. When a woman of Siena was found guilty of assault in 1342, her punishment was halved because she had attacked a man, then doubled because she had hit him in his home, and then doubled again because the infraction had occurred at night. In some Swedish cities, a robbery committed after the curfew bell warranted the death penalty. In many European jurisdictions, killing a housebreaker was legal if the crime occurred at night but not after sunrise.

Yet, for many people, notably women and the indigent, the night was just another sunless day. The poor stayed up late, husking corn, spinning wool, boiling sap, and pounding rice. Servants and women knitted, wove, washed, and carded wool. Farmers and fishermen often worked past sundown, and on the dark streets a few grim-looking men emerged to dispose of dead bodies, empty underground cesspools, and clean up after the horses and cows. Indeed, some people have always worked at night, ever since the first sentry took up his post in Mesopotamia three thousand years ago. In time, most towns and cities instituted a night watch, consisting of either a single man or a patrol, whose duties were to discourage thieves, keep a sharp eye out for fires, and make sure that doors were locked. The job didn't pay much, and it attracted the sort of people you didn't want to meet at night. When they weren't shouting out the hour at the top of their lungs, banging on doors, and rudely accosting people, watchmen drank, shirked, and consorted with prostitutes and thieves. Parisians called them *tristes-à-pattes* (flatfoots), and the English—witness Constable Dogberry, in "Much Ado About Nothing"—also poked fun at them.

Properly speaking, a history is an evolving narrative concerning a person, a place, or an idea that has left consecutive traces over time (a syntactical nicety ignored by titles that promise "histories" of dust or the smile). One can write a history of comedy but not of laughter. Ekirch believes that he's writing "the history of nighttime in Western society," but that would imply that someone else could do the same for the morning or for three in the afternoon. What he's writing, of course, is a history of Western society during the nighttime, which, judging from the Notes, involves scanning every work of literature, sermon, letter, diary, newspaper, song, folktale, and instructional pamphlet, as well as every court, church, and medical record, that mentions the night. "At Day's Close" may not be an old-fashioned history, but it's among the few books, aside from annals of technology, to anatomize the incremental attempts to illuminate the darkness.

Man began with flint and wood and moved on to torches and candles—tallow, wax, beeswax, and spermaceti, the fatty substance found inside the heads of sperm whales. But even the best candles don't emit much light, and long before the French knew about wattage they knew, "By candlelight a goat is ladylike." Lanterns were only marginally better, and even when they appeared by decree outside European residences, in the early fourteen-hundreds, they couldn't compete with a moonless night. Oil lamps, which were almost as ineffective, remained relatively unpopular until the eighteenth century, when technological innovations increased their brightness while minimizing the noxious fumes they released.

Better lamps and a demand for public lighting finally resulted in nearly five thousand oil lamps being installed in London in 1736. Ten years later, the prevalence of lamps in Paris led one Frenchman to declare, "The reign of the night is finally going to end." It didn't, of course, and when gas mantles were introduced in London, in 1807, the *Times* breathlessly declared, "There is nothing so important to the British realm, since that of navigation." The writing was on the wall, and, since gas lamps were ten to twelve times brighter than oil lamps, you could see it. With gas lights replacing lanterns and oil lamps, and watchmen giving way to official police forces, private and public events were moved back, shops closed their doors later, coach companies added to their nighttime schedules, and manufacturing began to go on around the clock.

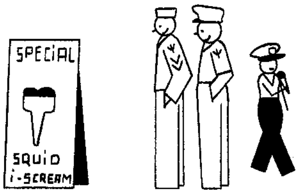
By the mid-seventeenth century, nights were not only less sinister. They were, Ekirch insists, fun: "In spite of myriad perils, it was night, not morning, not afternoon, that was valued most." This rather grand claim for the night's sudden appeal may have more to do with Ekirch's relief at no longer having to read about the terrors associated with the night than it does with ironclad evidence. Still, he's able to enlist a Welsh proverb that catches the sentiment nicely: John in the morning becomes Jack at night.

In general, Ekirch doesn't so much argue his case as let the facts speak for themselves. And it's not just what people did that draws his attention; anything even remotely associated with the night—fuels, wicks, torches, chimneys, curtains, weapons, superstitions—is tossed into the mix. Ekirch is like some trivia-mad guide who finds his own section of the universe unfailingly interesting, and quite often we do, too. Only a curmudgeonly reader would object to learning about "linkboys," candle-bearing escorts who accompanied timorous pedestrians around seventeenth-century London at night; or about "moon-men," who rode ahead of coaches or carriages holding a pole topped by a globular lantern.

Regrettably, however, Ekirch doesn't know when to hold back. Maybe it's mean to ask an author who has consulted twenty-one volumes of "The Statistical Account of Scotland: Drawn Up from the Communications of the Ministers of Different Parishes" to refrain from giving us the full fruits of his research, but, beyond a certain point, evidence no longer qualifies as knowledge. If a lot of accidents occurred after nightfall, a few examples will suffice; three robberies serve as well as thirteen to suggest the night's perils. Ekirch's catalogue of arson, drunkenness, and thievery would be justifiable if the quality of the crimes were shown to have changed radically over the centuries, but he seems more interested in the numbers. It's almost as if his immersion in the night has made everything gray. It's one thing to be told about the Ufficiali di Notte, a Florentine court convened after dark, whose docket included the prosecution of homosexuals. But do we actually require documentation that some men awoke with hangovers in 1700?

Nor does Ekirch shy from the obvious; at times, he fairly runs to embrace it. "Night was a fertile time for romantic liaisons of all sorts," he informs us, adding, "More than a few male suitors earned reputations for whispering false promises to young women." On the other hand, it's good to be reminded that servants frolicked at night and that slaves' spirits rose as the sun fell; and one can only be grateful to Ekirch for reporting a North Carolina planter's words about slaves' slant on time: " 'Night' was 'their day.' "

Any book about the night would be incomplete without a word about sleep, and, about three-quarters of the way through this one, Ekirch steers us toward the land of Nod. A good night's sleep for people in pre-industrial society was, at best, a long shot. There may not have been car alarms, ambulance sirens, or pneumatic drills, but there were watchmen shouting, bells ringing, dogs howling, mice scampering, roofs leaking, timbers shrinking, and chamber pots smelling. Most people slept on straw pallets or rough mats, or perhaps shared a cot with two or three siblings, along with fleas, lice, and bugs. Chronic fatigue was the norm, and sleep was valued in ways that we probably can't imagine. What rouses us from our own dogmatic slumbers, however, is Ekirch's assertion that "until the close of the early modern era, Western Europeans on most evenings experienced two major intervals of sleep bridged by up to an hour or more of wakefulness." People, evidently, awoke after midnight and, instead of tossing and turning, they regularly got up to talk, study, pray, and do chores.



In case we're skeptical, Ekirch has found references to the "first sleep," or *primo somno*, and the second sleep, sometimes called "morning sleep," in literature and letters. He has dug up a medical text that advised people with digestive problems to fall asleep on their right side during "the fyrste slepe," and "after the fyrste slepe turne on the lefte side"; and he assures us that Plutarch, Livy, and Virgil all invoked the term. Indeed, Ekirch supplies enough corroboration regarding the first and second snoozes to make segmented sleep seem like one of those customs, such as bundling and dog-baiting, which simply disappeared. "That all men sleep by intervals" required no further elaboration from John Locke, who did much of his sleeping during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Two hundred or so years later, as Ekirch sees it, artificial light had become so prevalent that people's sleep patterns began to change. Those who lived in cities were now able to work, read, and play long after nightfall, and segmented sleep gradually disappeared from urban culture.

What evolved is a shorter, seamless sleep, which, on the face of it, doesn't sound that bad. But Ekirch views our truncated sleep not just as a neutral statistic of modern life but as an offense against nature. Not only do we get too little sleep; our increased exposure to luminosity has "altered circadian rhythms as old as man himself." This, rather dismayingly, turns out to have some support in the medical community. In a study conducted at the National Institute of Mental Health which re-created conditions of "prehistoric" sleep, Dr. Thomas Wehr deprived volunteers of artificial light for up to fourteen hours at night for a span of several weeks. As Ekirch notes, the "subjects first lay awake in bed for two hours, slept for four, awakened again for two or three hours of quiet rest and reflection, and fell back asleep for four hours before finally awakening for good." In short, they began to exhibit "a pattern of broken slumber—one practically identical to that of pre-industrial households."

Wehr also observed that "the intervening period of 'non-anxious wakefulness' possessed 'an endocrinology all its own,' with visibly heightened levels of prolactin, a pituitary hormone best-known for stimulating lactation in nursing mothers and for permitting chickens to brood contentedly atop eggs for long stretches of time." And because Wehr "likened this period of wakefulness to something approaching an altered state of consciousness not unlike meditation," Ekirch proposes that we have lost touch with that deeper, more primal aspect of ourselves which emerges during moments after the first sleep. "By turning night into day," he writes, "modern technology has helped to obstruct our oldest path to the human psyche." If Ekirch is correct, then Thomas Edison placed entirely too much faith in his lighting device. "Put an undeveloped human being into an environment where there is artificial light," Edison predicted, "and he will improve."

But will he sleep as nature intended? It's hard to say. Most scientists are confident that internal biological timers regulate body temperature, hormone production, and sleep levels; and they're pretty sure that the suprachiasmatic nucleus, in the hypothalamus, regulates circadian oscillations. The neurobiology of the sleep-wake cycle is not in dispute, but it's one thing to know that some psychotic episodes are linked to malfunctioning biological clocks, and quite another to assert that segmented sleep is essential to some deeper understanding of who we are.

On what, then, does Ekirch rest his argument? Simply this: Because the break in sleep occurs at the end of an R.E.M. cycle (when dreaming is frequent), our ancestors were better attuned to the part of the subconscious which is responsible for dreams. And because they customarily jotted down their impressions of dreams it's clear that they took them more seriously than we do. By "they," Ekirch means the literate middle class, who supplied what evidence exists of segmented sleep. Apparently, the wealthy, who stayed up late, either enjoyed undivided sleep or failed to say otherwise. As for common laborers, they didn't know how to write, so there is scant evidence that they slept in shifts, and none to suggest that, had they awakened around midnight, they would have mulled over their dreams. It seems far more likely that a peasant, having spent ten or twelve hours in the fields clearing rocks, probably slept like one.

It should be noted that Ekirch's conclusion about the origins, if not the inadequacies, of seamless sleep was in dispute even before the publication of his book. In "Caffeine and the Coming of the Enlightenment," a brisk, informative essay that appeared in a 2003 issue of *Raritan*, Roger Schmidt, an English professor at Idaho State, stands Ekirch's argument on its head. According to Schmidt, it was the introduction of caffeine and coffee houses in the late seventeenth century, along with the practice of late-night reading, the development of the first accurate clocks and timepieces, and the consolidation of the Protestant ethos ("Time is money"), that worked to devalue the idea of sleep. And this, in turn, "created a demand for better nocturnal lighting." Just what we need: another chicken-or-egg argument.

Never mind. Ekirch is a man on a mission and, to a remarkable degree, he has reclaimed that portion of the circadian cycle which historians have traditionally neglected. He has emptied night's pockets, and laid the contents out before us. If the resulting work, with all its proverbs, adages, anecdotes, facts, and figures, smells a little of the lamp, it's a fair trade-off. "At Day's Close" serves to remind us of night's ancient mystery, of the real reason we reach for the light switch. Ultimately, it's not the wattage but Dante's *lustro sopra* that we yearn for—God's grandeur flaming out "like shining from shook foil." The night may also be His handiwork, but who really likes the dark except vampires and people with sensitive retinas? Darkness suggests ignorance and hopelessness, and, as a symbol of despair or bad tidings, it can't be beat. Would Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, be remembered half so well had he not mused, after seeing a lamplighter turning up the gas lamps outside his office on the eve of the First World War, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime"? No one wants the lights to go out, and all our valiant attempts to illuminate the night are merely fearful expressions of the permanent darkness that awaits. ♦

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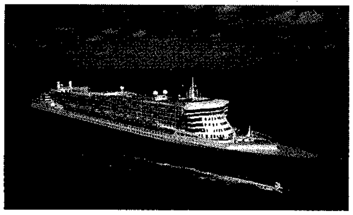

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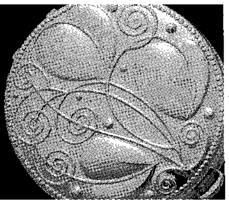

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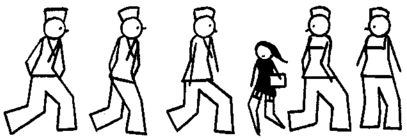
BRIEFLY NOTED

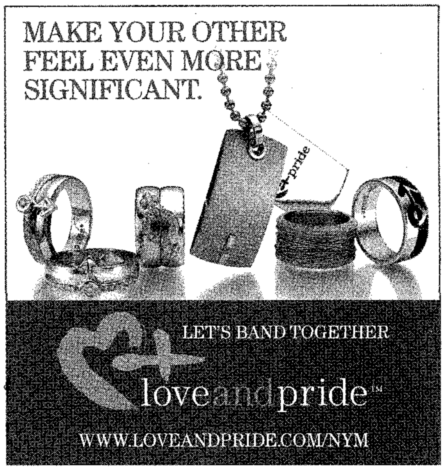
Acts of Faith, *by Philip Caputo (Knopf; $26.95).* Nothing is omitted in this ambitious novel depicting the turbulent lives of several aid workers at the height of the Sudanese civil war. Caputo, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and the author of a Vietnam memoir, includes more characters, plot lines, and big ideas than a single mind can track, but he writes so authoritatively that it doesn't matter. In the course of nearly seven hundred pages, he encompasses military offensives, the lave trade, arms-running operations, passionate romances, religious conversions, childhood memories, and rampant corruption, in a portrait of a place where "God and the Devil are one and the same." Caputo lays the groundwork of the novel carefully, introducing his disparate cast of characters; then, as the various plot lines come together, the book picks up speed. Caputo may have set out to write an epic parable about the dangers of uncritical belief, but he ended up with, quite simply, a great story.

Evidence of Love, *by Melissa McConnell (Harcourt; $14).* When Catherine's fiancé, a special adviser to the President, disappears, leaving only a brief note, we are left to ponder his motives: is it loyalty to the government that makes him abandon Catherine (a speechwriter for the Vice-President) or is it that the fault lines in their relationship have been showing ever since they moved to Washington? McConnell's recounting of Catherine's attempt to start her life anew is smooth and self-assured, but the characters remain guarded and at some level impenetrable, as if they were being protected by the Secret Service personnel who populate these pages. When McConnell is describing the intricacies of White House operations—and especially when she leads Catherine through a surprisingly believable love affair with the Vice-President—she writes with the nuance and control of a true insider.



Bound for Canaan, *by Fergus M. Bordewich (Amistad; $27.95).* In the first years of the nineteenth century, most runaway slaves didn't get very far: "Slave holders sought to impress their slaves with a belief in the boundlessness of slave territory," Frederick Douglass wrote, and, given the reach of fugitive slave laws, "the real distance was great enough." Those who did make it almost always had the help of Quakers, free blacks, and other opponents of slavery, who composed what Bordewich calls a "national geography of freedom." This engrossing account of the Underground Railroad describes how scattered "experimental, impulsive" acts (for instance, defending a fugitive from a patrol) became an organized operation involving thousands of stationmasters, conductors, and spies. Some of the less known, and more remarkable, stories here involve the black workers on the Railroad, such as Arnold Gragston, who, while remaining a slave, ferried hundreds of runaways across the Ohio River until 1863, when he became his own last passenger.

A Matter of Opinion, *by Victor S. Navasky (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27).* "Journals of opinion are not by themselves going to save the world," Navasky admits, but, in nearly three decades of running *The Nation* and in four hundred-odd pages here, he remains a tireless evangelist for the idea that the world as we know it—liberal, democratic, and Enlightened—won't be saved without them and the public discourse they foster. Opinion magazines themselves, however, survive on the strength of their editors, or, as Navasky points out, on the reach of their editors' Rolodexes, and, luckily for *The Nation*, Navasky knows almost everyone. The front-room tour of his charmed rise from the Little Red School House to the publisher's chair includes visits with Bob Guccione, Paul Newman, and Jürgen Habermas. Along the way, Allen Ginsberg sleeps on the floor, formerly blacklisted members of the Hollywood Ten defame each other, and Norman Mailer claims he's never sold out.



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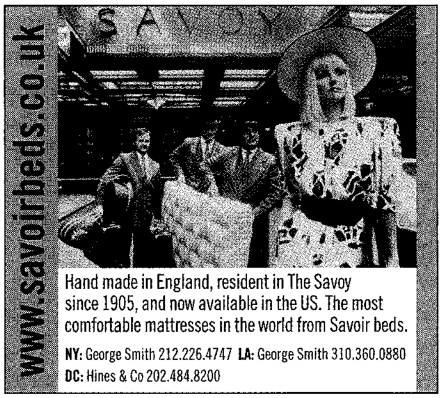

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THE THEATRE

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Class lines, countries, and oceans are crossed Off Broadway.

BY HILTON ALS

August Strindberg (1849-1912) was among the first modern playwrights to examine the Gordian knot of family, class differences, and sexual desire. In his brilliant and bitter and sometimes mad work, men are generally predisposed not to like women, and women are given to spitting in the faces of the men whom they have, at one time or another, professed to love—or not love, exactly, but need. And it is the Swedish-born Strindberg's horror of, and fascination with, need in all human beings—the need for authority, the need to be defiled or overcome—that gives his work its peculiar lasting power. His short, clipped dialogue is often suffused with suspicion, while his monologues alternate between recrimination and dreams of longing or annihilation. In a number of his plays, novels, and memoirs, Strindberg seems to suggest that since God—the ultimate authority figure—is silent, the limits that he supposedly places on his children must really be self-imposed. The only religion that works is the cruelty that man inflicts on himself and others.

As the child of a working-class mother and a more privileged father, Strindberg was born into his central theme: power. Not just the power the rich have over the poor—which, in his world, they never fail to exploit—but the power of women, which he generally views as vampiric and alluring, a life force that both poisons and enlightens. "There is nothing absolutely evil," Strindberg wrote in the introduction to his 1888 play "Miss Julie" (now being performed in a new adaptation, by Craig Lucas, at the Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre). "The succession of rise and fall is one of life's greatest fascinations. . . . And to the man with a program who desires to rectify the unfortunate fact that the bird of prey devours the dove and that the lice eat the bird of prey, I wish to put this question: 'Why should it be rectified?' "

Set in the kitchen of Miss Julie's father, a landowning count, the drama centers on class and sexual differences as they are played out between Miss Julie (Marin Hinkle) and her father's butler and valet, Jean (the talented Reg Rogers). "Crazy, but completely, insane," Jean says at the opening of the play. It is midsummer night's eve, and he is talking to his fiancée, Kristine (Julia Gibson), who is the family cook. Jean goes on, "Took the Count to the station, and then just stopped in the barn to take a look, *really*, and she's dancing with the gamekeeper, but leading like she's the man, around and around with him trying to dance backwards." The "she" Jean is describing with such relish to the God-fearing Kristine (who quotes Scripture as a way of expressing her own class resentment) is, of course, Miss Julie, with whom Jean soon becomes emotionally and sexually involved—primarily owing to Julie's persistence.

What draws Julie and Jean to each other is precisely their class difference. (Tellingly, Jean almost never addresses Miss Julie as anything but that.) Their union is inevitable because it is forbidden. Built into their attraction, too, is the fact that the ambitious Jean, who speaks French and has aristocratic pretensions, may possess Miss Julie's body but will never truly be accepted into her world. "Oh, Miss Julie—a dog can lie on the Countess's sofa, a horse can be caressed on the cheek by the Miss's hand, but a peasant's son . . ." he says to her. Miss Julie, however, is not particularly interested in men of her own status; by the time she declares her interest in Jean, she has already spurned at least one "well-bred guy" who wanted to marry her. Miss Julie's desire is defined by the pursuit of that which she is not. And when, at the end of the play, she pushes Jean to assume the mantle of power—to run away with her, to tell her what to do—he still takes it as an order shouted across a divide: he is her lover, yes, but he is also her servant, even if that servitude is only in his mind.

There are layers to Hinkle's Miss Julie, but unfortunately too many of them are soft; the director, Anders Cato, has failed to draw from her the complicated sense of evil and manipulation that is necessary for the part. As a result, we find ourselves watching her not for her interpretation of the role but as someone whom Rogers can play against. The day I saw the show, he got off to a shaky start, but after about half an hour the performance picked up, and then he was unstoppable. His love of acting is such that one hardly notices the deficiencies in Lucas's adaptation or in Julia Gibson's awkward characterization of Kristine. Rogers—who resembles a meatier Adrien Brody—is a star, and he wants you to know it.

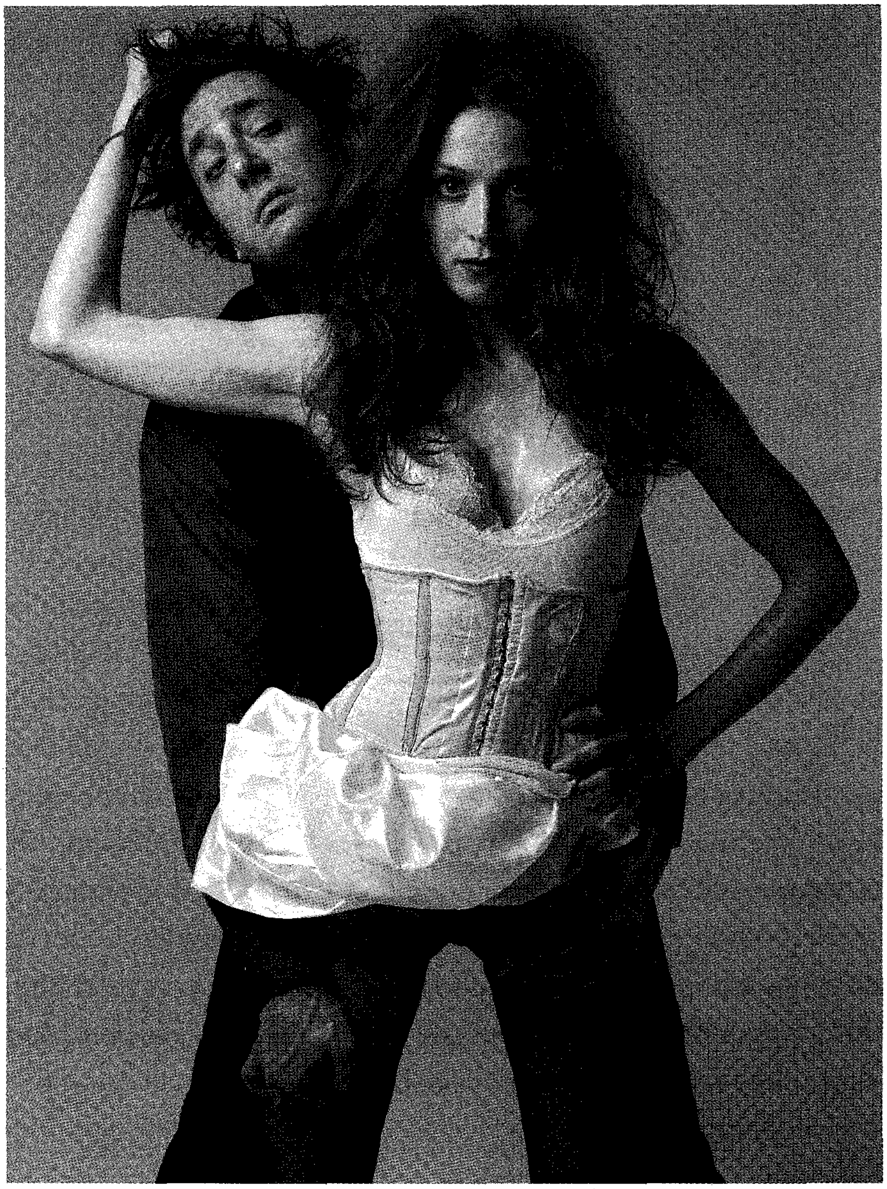
"Memory House," by Kathleen Tolan (under the direction of David Esbjornson, at Playwrights Horizons), is a vexing work, both strange and irritating, largely because its protagonist, an eighteen-year-old high-school senior called Katia (Natalia Zvereva), is a tiny soul with a big mouth. What comes out of that mouth—complaint after complaint—sours the air around her to such a degree that viewers find themselves wanting not only to turn away from her halitosis of the soul but to leave the theatre altogether. Which is a pity, given that the play also stars Dianne Wiest—as Maggie, the woman who, along with her now ex-husband, adopted Katia from a Russian orphanage when she was five or six—and any opportunity to see Wiest perform is cheering. Wiest is as natural an actress as they come, with a lovely, trilling voice and a fluttery imagination. (She is like a swallow darting in and out of the patches of sunlight that she herself projects.) But, no matter how beautifully she can play every moment here, she is not supported by a substantive play, or player, and it's sad to see her wading in such shallow dramaturgical waters.

It is New Year's Eve in New York, and mother and daughter are spending it together. But, if Katia's hip-hoploving, churlish nature is any indication, Maggie is no heartwarming model of motherhood. For no apparent reason—or, at least, no reason that Tolan, a competent writer with little insight or perception, can make clear—Katia wants to go back to Russia, with Vlad, a childhood friend who shares her origins. Katia has no real relationship to her mother country. She has no relationship to anything except her endless reserves of whiny criticism. Doesn't Maggie know, Katia says, that Yeltsin was a complete pig and a total criminal, and that America was complicit in his stupid tyranny? Everything in life is ridiculous, everything in the world is a fraud, Katia implies—or shouts—while Maggie tries to convince her otherwise, largely by engaging in a number of nurturing acts as Katia drones on and on: baking a blueberry pie and lovingly unfolding the dress that Katia was wearing when Maggie brought her to America.

Of course, every child eventually has to leave home in order to become him or herself. But what kind of self will Katia become if she keeps rejecting Maggie's tough but unconditional love—Maggie, as it turns out, *is* a good mother, but she's no pushover—in favor of her unexplained hurt? Tolan does the play a disservice by failing to tell us who Katia is behind her arias of injustice; Maggie isn't fully drawn, either. So we are left with two ciphers—one who acts, and one who can't, since Zvereva doesn't have much of a character to inhabit. (Zvereva, who resembles the movie ingénue Kirsten Dunst, is making her New York stage début in "Memory House." One can only hope that casting directors will see through her adequate performance in a poorly written role to the actress lurking underneath.) At the end of the play, Katia shares with her mother the college-application essay she has written on memory and becoming, but the scene feels tacked on, the only feasible way to end the show—which one doesn't remember so much as look forward to forgetting.

Garth Wingfield's "Flight" (a Melting Pot Theatre Company production, at the Lucille Lortel) is a well-crafted play that sets out to explore the troubling personal and professional history of the aviator and inventor Charles Lindbergh (Gregg Edelman). Among the many points that Wingfield illuminates in his sparse, cinematic script is the way in which the mythic moments of Lindbergh's life—the transatlantic crossing, the notorious kidnapping of his child—more or less stifled any chance he might have had to become a person, rather than a public figure. In newsreels and articles from the time, Lindbergh hardly ever seems to inhabit his body, let alone establish anything more than the most cursory intimacy, even in his forty-five-year marriage to the writer Anne Morrow (played here with sparkling lyricism by Kerry O'Malley).

A practical joker and an anti-Semite, Lindbergh—at least, as the spookily accurate Edelman portrays him—comes off as baffled by the events of his own life, even as they swirl around his lanky frame. He uses his shadowy affect and his nasal whine as a hammer to flatten them out. The portrait is accurate, but it's difficult to watch an empty character without feeling, in the end, that there's something missing from the play as well. And what's missing from "Flight" is any possibility of identification with Lindbergh in his tragedy of non-being. Still, there's enough going on in the play—an all-around strong cast, and equally strong direction, by Nick Corley—to make it more than just a misguided entertainment. It's a showcase of performers and ideas that should be heard. ♦



Reg Rogers and Marin Hinkle in "Miss Julie." Photograph by Max Vadukul.

MUSICAL EVENTS

THE WAVES

"Tristan" in Paris, and "Cyrano" at the Met.

BY ALEX ROSS

It was in Paris that the liquid revolution of "Tristan und Isolde" first entered the bloodstream of the world. Wagner conducted the Prelude to the opera at three concerts in 1860, baffling most of the audience with his art of endless melody, his chords of longing that never resolve. But the bohemians of Paris fell into a trance—at one of these concerts, Baudelaire experienced "love unbridled, immense, chaotic, raised to the level of a counter-religion, a Satanic religion"—and the phenomenon of Wagnerism began. Shock effects of the mass-market or avant-garde variety are now so routine that we no longer know what it's like to go slowly, majestically, and irreversibly over the edge. Leave it to the director Peter Sellars to make "Tristan" mind-bending once again. His production of the opera, created in collaboration with the video artist Bill Viola, was first seen last fall, in semi-staged form, at Disney Hall, in Los Angeles, and the definitive version opened last month at the Opéra Bastille, in Paris. I saw the last performance of the Paris run, and came away in something like the state of dazed bliss that Baudelaire described.

Bill Viola's liquid imagery complements the flow of Wagner's music.

The dominant presence in this Southern California "Tristan" is Viola, whose images play for almost the entire duration of the opera, on a screen behind the singers. The artist has in common with Wagner a disdain for the rhythms of daily life: in his work, events often happen in slow motion, so that they acquire an atmosphere of sacred ritual. Much of the first act of the "Tristan" video is taken up by footage of a man and a woman walking toward the camera, removing their clothes, and washing themselves at a fountain. The compositions have a glowing clarity, like Renaissance frescoes. The faces are devoid of obvious emotion, yet are focussed by meditative feeling. There are few direct traces of the medieval legend on which Wagner based the opera: no ship on which Tristan brings Isolde to King Mark, her appointed husband; no garden where the lovers conduct their secret tryst; no castle where Tristan suffers and dies. Yet, on another level, the film is obsessively faithful to the human and natural elements that Wagner obsessively invokes—faces, eyes, hair, bodies, air, fire, earth, water.

Water above all: this production may be remembered as the "Tristan" that goes beneath the waves. Wagner's libretto is soaked in water from start to finish; Act I begins with a sailor hailing the ocean, and Act III ends with Isolde preparing "to drown, to sink—unconscious—highest bliss!" Viola, likewise dwells at length on the sensation of immersion. One visually astounding moment occurs after Tristan and Isolde imbibe the love potion, in Act I. For several minutes, the screen is featureless except for two tiny human figures, intertwined and gesturing. Then the bodies fill the screen, and the screen seems to bend and bubble with them. It turns out that we have been watching from the bottom of a pool of water as the couple dive in. The plunge coincides with a crucial moment in the score—the moment when the arching phrases of the Prelude are heard again, setting in motion the first great love duet.

Indelible images appear throughout: Tristan walks through a wall of fire, and afterward embers glow on his shirt like stars; Isolde lights a vast array of candles, one by one; the sun rises in real time through the branches of a solitary tree; the dead Tristan is raised in the air by a swell of water. And there are many other stunning congruences of sight and sound. The sunrise sequence unfolds during King Mark's lament for Tristan's betrayal, and the sun first glimmers over the horizon when the English horn lingers dejectedly on the note A. (At each performance, an editor adjusts the pace of the video in accordance with the tempos of the night.)

Some operagoers in Paris complained that Viola's work distracted from the efforts of the singers and players. I didn't have that problem, although it took me a quarter hour or two to grow accustomed to the overlapping of onscreen and onstage action. Because the images move so slowly, they don't impose a competing montage rhythm. Instead, they are subsumed by the flow of Wagner's music. I found myself listening with heightened alertness, as if the film were bringing Wagner into sharper focus. The images seemed to arise from the subconscious of the score, from the mysterious nexus where words become notes. After all, there can be no better metaphor for the experience of listening to Wagner than a plunge into deep blue water.

Sellars achieved the remarkable feat of erasing his own presence. The long-reigning activist director has not lost his power to confound; in a recent Carnegie Hall staging of György Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments," he induced Dawn Upshaw to apply a prop steam iron to her face. But there was nothing outré in the "Tristan" production. Sets were minimal, the stage action incisive and straightforward. Only once did Sellars dramatically intervene: at the end of Act I, when Tristan and Isolde break out of their first duet to land on the hostile ground of Cornwall, the houselights went up, cruelly dispelling the magic of the love-potion scene, and King Mark was discovered standing in the middle of the orchestra seats, silently staring up at the lovers. That bone-chilling apparition not only forecast the eventual tragedy but also had the effect of putting the film in its place: live actors asserted their flesh-and-blood presence. The characters in the video seemed to have a sadness to them, as if they knew that they were trapped in a digital world, whereas the singers exulted in their freedom.

The leads were Waltraud Meier and Ben Heppner, both in great voice. Meier's Isolde is a familiar quantity, but still unpredictable; her cutting accents, her way of flaring the end of the phrase, her precise but spontaneous-seeming stage gestures convey every hairpin turn of emotion. Heppner has emerged from a rocky patch with his voice in better shape than ever. A couple of years ago, listening to him was an anxious experience: you cringed in expectation that his gorgeous legato would run aground on a cracked note, which it periodically did. Now the voice seems solid to its roots, and Heppner has the confidence to take the risks that make for a raw, hair-raising Act III. Yvonne Naef, as Brangäne, held her own against Meier with a bold, deep mezzo tone. The weak link in the cast was Franz-Josef Selig, an effortful, leathery King Mark.

Esa-Pekka Salonen led the pioneering performances of the Sellars-Viola "Tristan" in Los Angeles last fall, and he travelled with the production to Paris. He offered a hugely impressive interpretation of a score on which almost every great conductor of the past century has made his mark. Already in the Prelude, you had a sense of a canny master plan, with crescendos plotted like parabolas of expanding size. Not unexpectedly, this contemporary-minded conductor made much of the work's sharper edges: he had the violins lean on a passing note in the Act III prelude, highlighting a brief semitone clash. There was a startling sonority in the scene of Tristan's death: the wind and brass choirs were eerily glassy and smooth, almost electronic in timbre. For the most part, though, this was an authentically Romantic reading, not a revisionist one. True to the atmosphere of the production, it had a surging and ebbing natural rhythm.

The Paris Opéra is now under the direction of Gérard Mortier, who led the Salzburg Festival from 1991 to 2001. Much of what Mortier did in Salzburg has gone down in the annals of pseudo-transgressive opera direction; his Paris regime will undoubtedly bring more of the same. But he also knows real talent when he sees it, and he is a longtime supporter of Sellars's ventures. His programming for next season knocks sidewise that of any opera house in America: a return of this "Tristan," under Valery Gergiev; a revival of Hindemith's Weimar Republic shocker "Cardillac"; a general repertory running from the Baroque to the avant-garde; and, most important, the world première of Kaija Saariaho's opera "Adriana Mater." Perhaps Paris audiences, which ceased to be surprised sometime between Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," of 1913, and George Antheil's airplane-propeller concert, of 1926, will teach Mortier the futility of inciting the bourgeoisie. Better to humble them with transcendence, as this "Tristan" does.

I can think of maybe fifty works that should have been introduced into the Metropolitan Opera repertory in advance of Franco Alfano's 1936 mediocrity "Cyrano de Bergerac," which just had three performances at the house. Start with Strauss's "Daphne," Nielsen's "Maskarade," Britten's "Gloriana," and Messiaen's "Saint Francis." Why is the Met wasting its time on a lesser work by a lesser composer who is best known to operagoers for having made a garish mess of the ending of Puccini's unfinished "Turandot"? Because Plácido Domingo likes the piece, and Domingo is one of the few singers who can still sell out the house. The Met has fulfilled the tenor's whim with a classy show. Francesca Zambello directed the production, in picture-postcard rather than provocative mode. Sondra Radvanovsky, a new Met star with an unforced, luminous, richly expressive soprano voice, sang opposite the inexhaustible Domingo. Marco Armiliato conducted enthusiastically. But no amount of fabulosity can redeem the opera itself, which must have seemed like a stopgap even at its première.

Alfano hardly lacked talent. He wrote expertly for the voice; he had an ear for quirky tonal harmony; his orchestration glitters like the best of Nelson Riddle. An Italian who longed to be French, he copied Debussy, Ravel, and Les Six more than he did Puccini. There are subtle, wry, poignant moments scattered through his adaptation of "Cyrano," including a very haunting "Pelléas"-like duet for the hero and Roxane at the end. But whenever Alfano feels a climax approaching he goes in for crude, gassy, Technicolor sounds, of the sort that make his completion of "Turandot" so intolerable. It's as if he didn't trust his finer instincts to make an impression. The contrast with the man who wrote "Tristan" could not be more extreme. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Boulder (Colo.) Daily Camera.

At least one driver reported Saturday evening that a nude man was "streaking" on eastbound U.S. 36 in Broomfield, according to police and police scanner reports.

Broomfield police officer Jim Alston said there are no suspects. He said an officer found an abandoned car in the vicinity of the incident with a note that he thought read: "Gone to get pants," and that he thought the car may have belonged to the streaker.

However, Alston said, it turned out the note read: "Gone to get parts."

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THE ART WORLD

STRING THEORY

Jasper Johns's new work.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

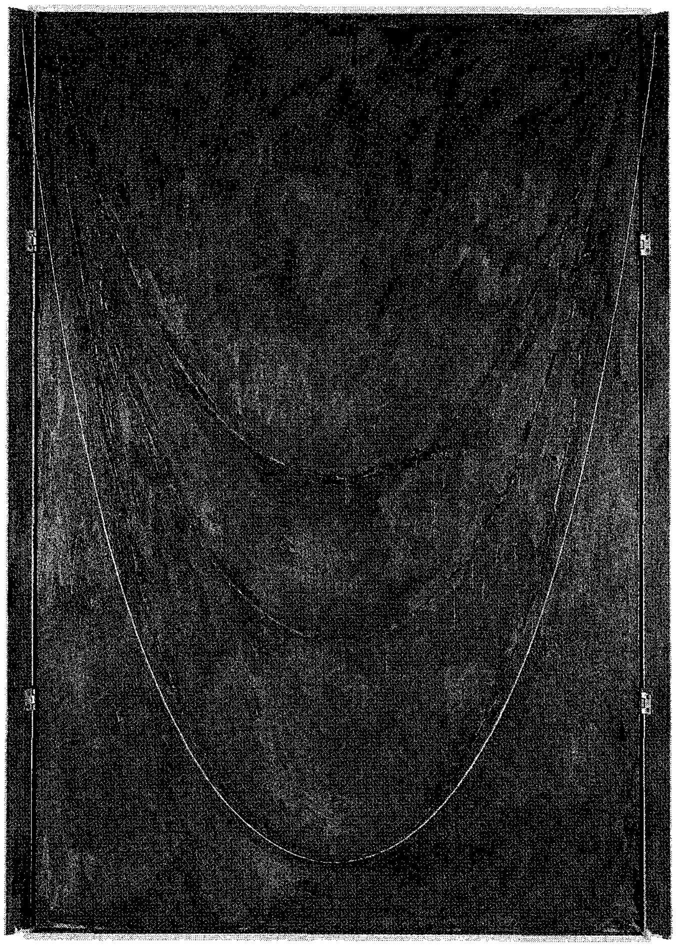
“Jasper Johns: Catenary,” a large show of paintings, drawings, and prints at the Matthew Marks Gallery, is advertised as a return to form. In the opening sentence of the catalogue's introduction, the art historian Scott Rothkopf writes, “Johns's paintings had grown too full”—conceding, in a remarkable gambit of damage control, a widely felt distaste for the artist's works of the nineteen-eighties and nineties, which were “jam-packed with signs of Johns's life and art.” (Those signs included allusions to Leonardo, Grünewald, Duchamp, and Picasso; dolorous references to an unhappy childhood and encroaching death; recyclings of the artist's signature motifs; and coy hints of private meaning.) Rothkopf hastens to his good news: “Johns wiped the slate clean.” Would that it were so. Johns has only reduced the number of elements in works that still bespeak self-imitative pastiche, and tied them together, almost literally, with real and drawn catenaries. (A catenary is the curve assumed by a cord hanging freely from two points.) Sagging strings cross most of the paintings, at times attached to thin wooden slats that may be hinged or cantilevered at the edges of a canvas. The new works do reëmphasize the cynosures of his painterly genius: tone and touch. Subtly varied, tenderly stroked grays in mixtures of oil paint and wax predominate. But those plangent qualities, once so moving, feel forced here.

Falloffs in the later work of major artists are so far from unusual as to be the rule in our mercurial culture. But Johns still raises hopes—he can already boast of having had a second act in his fifty-year career—and so retains the power to disappoint. In many ways, we still inhabit an art world that he inaugurated in the late nineteen-fifties, along with his ally Robert Rauschenberg and, not least, their dealer, Leo Castelli. The eureka moment came in 1954, when, at the age of twenty-four, Johns made a strong, delicate painting that didn't just represent but, when you thought about it, *was* the American flag—a sign the same as what it signified. By taking an object from the realm of common fact—as he did throughout the fifties and early sixties, with paintings of targets, numbers, maps, and more flags—and then returning it to that realm transfigured, he rescued art from the endgames of modern art, including lately played-out Abstract Expressionism. His breakthrough democratized art's worldly estate, projecting a sensibility at once public and private, high and low, and bohemian and bourgeois. But, like other revolutionary insights in art history, this one was swiftly subsumed by other artists. And by the mid-sixties Johns's incisive early work had given way to a first phase of “too full” supererogation in arch, hectic painting-constructions that seemed to bode inevitable decline.

But then came the abstract hatch paintings of the seventies—uniform patterns of clustered diagonal lines in primary or secondary colors, producing visual equivalents of symphonic music in major or minor keys. (The common term for those works is “cross-hatch,” but their lines never cross.) They not only clarified Johns's contribution to aesthetics—the euphoric irony of infusing banal designs with sensitive, intelligent, painterly persuasiveness—but seemed to interweave mutually resistant strands of modern art: the expressive, the decorative, and the cerebral, with an occasional whiff of the perverse. (Some of the paintings secreted sexual whimsies: faint circles referred to holes in wooden boxes, called “Dutch wives,” that once comforted sailors at sea.) The hatch paintings—and drawings and prints, modulating the idea across the many mediums in which Johns is a virtuoso—justified a general sense, which was validated by record auction prices, of Johns as the crown prince of American art after Abstract Expressionism, at least in America. (A persistent coolness to Johns overseas points up the nationalist element in his initial fame as a herald of American culture in its moment of global triumph.) This show, his first since a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1996, seemed pre-scripted for fresh glory.

Instead, the thirty-eight works on hand amount to Johnsian exercises in kit form. You see what he's doing and get what you're supposed to like about it, but nothing compelling happens. The deflationary effect feels retroactively dire, to the extent that I have popped over to MOMA to see if his early works suffer from it. (They're fine.) The show's lesson for me is that Johns's greatness is often misconstrued, perhaps even by himself. There are two sides to the matter: historical and temperamental. The 1954-55 "Flag" changed the way educated people from then on would look at any painting—as a thing as well as a picture. Like a prophetic Rosetta stone, it correlated terms that, several years later, would define both Pop art and minimalism: universal subject, irreducible form. Timing made Johns appear to be a demiurgic agent of titanic social and artistic changes that were going to occur in any event. Such a crusading posture—which came naturally to Rauschenberg, as it did to Jackson Pollock and, later, to Andy Warhol—scarcely befitted Johns, who had been, as he essentially remains, a shy, self-absorbed collagist and a poetry-reading, intellectual gamesman influenced by the koanlike musical conundrums of John Cage.

It has never mattered much what Johns's work is about, only that it be something that justifies reimagining what a painting is or might be—a galvanizing challenge to artists four and five decades ago, an academic preoccupation since then. His best pieces (including above all, for me, his maps of the United States, which are lavished with inexhaustible eruptions of inspired gesture and piquant color) bring maximum emotional energy to bear on subjects of minimum personal significance; and they keep his cleverness busy making crucial structural decisions. His worst pieces are about the artist himself, and teem with gratuitous bright ideas. Oscar Wilde warned against trusting people when they venture to speak as themselves: "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth." As is the case with many charismatically mysterious people, when you glimpse what Johns usually hides he disillusions. The congested autobiographical and erudite impedimenta in his works of the eighties and nineties testified that he had fallen into the most common of traps for the creative and the successful—he began to agree with his fans that whatever interests him has to be significant. Now he has attempted to retreat behind a curtain of hermetic, teasingly simple formats. The result is undernourished and overthought.



"Untitled" (2001), one of the paintings in Johns's new show.

Johns's catenaries have a source in poetry, denoted by the title of one work, "Bridge," alluding to Hart Crane's magnum opus, which was dedicated to the Brooklyn Bridge. Other works display the names of Manet and Degas in the artist's standard stencilled lettering—a reference to Degas's partial reassembly of a Manet painting of the execution of Maximilian, which had been cut into pieces after the artist's death. (Abstract forms in Johns's pictures mimic that patchwork composition, which is in the National Gallery in London.) To be touched by these allusions requires, first, that you share a reverence for the poet and the artists, which I certainly do, and, second, that you grant Johns a proprietary relation to them, which is another matter entirely. The Olympian presumption strikes me as precious and airless—coming from someone who once made a marvellous, monumental-seeming, painted life-size bronze of two Ballantine ale cans. By apostrophizing a poem and a painting that were alike in being heroically ambitious, Johns's tributes also hint at an apt self-criticism of his career. He is an artist of formidable lyric and analytic gifts, who at times has fallen prey to pursuing epic and dramatic ends. So, too, were Manet and Crane (though never Degas), whose nostalgia for premodern forms of history painting and bardic poetry led them to certain eccentricities. Might Johns be consciously addressing the problem? It's a thought, typical of the many that he always arouses when you speculate on his intentions. (Perhaps no other artist except Duchamp has inspired denser and knottier exegetical criticism.) But by failing the one test that art cannot waive, that of immediate pleasure, this show leaves me with no hankering to chase after answers. ♦

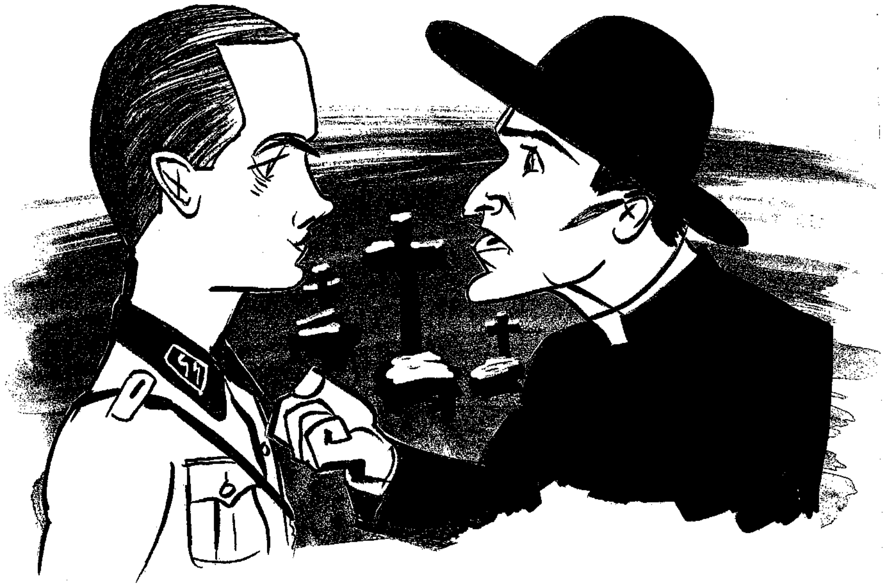
THE CURRENT CINEMA

FREE CHOICE

"The Ninth Day" and "Madagascar."

BY DAVID DENBY

As everyone knows, John Wayne always played John Wayne. He was terrific at it, but it was a limited role. Given his bulk and his peculiar ambulatory sway, could it have been any different? There are other kinds of actors, of course, for whom anatomy is not necessarily destiny, and they can do anything. So far, it's hard to tell which category the German actor Ulrich Matthes belongs to. He's certainly very talented, yet it is hard to imagine this slender, hawk-faced, haunted-looking man appearing in a light comedy or a German-language remake of "On the Town." Like Wayne, Matthes may be predestined to play the same kind of role over and over—in his case, a fanatic burning with anguish and intellectual fire. Matthes, who is active in the theatre in Berlin and Vienna as well as in movies, was Joseph Goebbels in Oliver Hirschbiegel's recent "Downfall," and now, reversing ideological garments, he plays a heroic and brilliant anti-Nazi priest in Volker Schlöndorff's fascinating "The Ninth Day." In both roles, Matthes has a spooked, black-eyed stare that exposes the whites above his irises—the natural expression of characters who may be mad, or who may simply think and feel more than ordinary mortals. Beneath the eyes, expansive cheekbones traverse his face like battlements, giving way, alarmingly, to long planes coursing downward to a sharp chin. The late Klaus Kinski had a similar kind of gargoyle strangeness and fervor, but Kinski was a noisy showoff. By contrast, when Matthes stares, he seems to be looking inward. There's something disturbing, even uncanny, about him—he could be one of El Greco's saints.



August Diehl and Ulrich Matthes in Volker Schlöndorff's new movie.

"The Ninth Day," written by Eberhard Görner and Andreas Pflüger, is based on the diary of Father Jean Bernard, a real-life hero of wartime Luxembourg. Bernard made movies for the International Catholic Film Organization before the war and edited the *Luxemburger Wort*, a daily newspaper, after it; eventually, he became the Bishop of Luxembourg. Bernard, I suspect, was a more worldly, pleasure-loving, and wily figure than Henri Kremer (as he is called here), the self-tormenting man played by Matthes. As the filmmakers tell it, in the dreadful winter of 1942 Kremer, along with anti-Nazi priests from all over occupied Europe, is interned at a special barracks in Dachau. Suddenly, he is sent home on a nine-day leave. In Luxembourg, a shrewd young S.S. officer named Gebhardt (August Diehl) takes control of him and tries to use him to bring around Luxembourg's anti-Nazi bishop. If Kremer can get the bishop to declare his support for the Third Reich, he will not have to return to the camp. The pressures are ferocious: Gebhardt threatens to have Kremer's family and the dissident clerics interned in Dachau killed. In the inimitable Nazi style, the S.S. has done its best to eliminate the possibility of individual martyrdom and even moral choice (Kremer will incur guilt whatever he does). The priest hates the Nazis; he's enraged and intransigent, but he's also, as Gebhardt learns, mortified by his own survival. Words are dangerous in these situations, and at times Kremer says very little, but Matthes works out the tensions physically. A humble-looking figure in a black flat-brimmed padre's hat, he attains the illimitable power of fanaticism.

Schlöndorff, born in 1939, kicked off the New German Cinema back in 1966 with his sinister adaptation of Robert Musil's novel "Young Törless." The German movement has long since declined, but Schlöndorff seems to have survived intact. He has specialized in political films ("The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum," "Circle of Deceit," "Legend of Rita") and literary adaptations (o Proust and Günter Grass, among others). Some of his movies have been didactic and heavy-footed, but not "The Ninth Day." This film is powerful, concise, fully sustained. In movies, the concentration camps have been dramatized so often that further representation of them threatens to become kitsch, but Schlöndorff, working in brief strokes, rapidly sets up the world of labor, brutality, and death without resorting to cliché. For American audiences, he has a new subject: the sufferings of the anti-Nazi Catholic clergy. Banding together in the camp, the men, from different countries, speak in Latin and celebrate Mass whenever they can, but the Nazis' cruelties are so extreme that some of them wonder if God has not forsaken them. "The Ninth Day" is a very bleak movie, but it has its own kind of mournful beauty. In the midwinter grayness of northern Europe—not a trace of red or blue anywhere—the light seems to have gone out, but at least one soul burns with an almost phosphorescent brightness.

"The Ninth Day" is a full-scale production, but the center of the movie is a series of theological disputes between Kremer and his S.S. keeper. August Diehl, who is large, handsome, and very young, makes Gebhardt an intelligent and desperate figure, a man who almost became a priest himself and whose compensatory fervor for the Reich has grown as great as Kremer's fervor for God. He s a tempter, telling the priest that Judas s the secret hero of the Gospels—by betraying Jesus he set up the Crucifixion and man's eventual salvation. In the same way, Kremer's capitulation will allow the Christian Reich to defeat the godless Bolshevik hordes. During the war, the Nazis approached the Vatican with similar arguments, so Gebhardt's brief is no trivial matter. Finding a way to resist this sophistry, the harrowed Kremer at last allows himself the sinful pride of anger. At the end, Matthes's eyes change focus, and, for once, instead of looking inward, he stares the Devil right in the face.

In the animated feature "Madagascar," Marty (Chris Rock), a zebra in the old Central Park Zoo (back when it had more exotic fare than sea lions and polar bears), is suffering from wanderlust. At night, he hears "Born Free" playing through his dreams as he gambols on the savannas of some imagined paradise. In the morning, however, he's stuck in the zoo, along with his lion friend, Alex (Ben Stiller), who roars for children and waves his paws at them. Alex is a trouper; he's quite comfortable doing a couple of shows a day for tourists as long as he gets a large steak afterward. Neither he nor Melman (David Schwimmer), a hypochondriac giraffe who fusses over his medication, has any desire to leave captivity. Looking after these quarrelsome friends, the brisk and commonsensical hippo Gloria (Jada Pinkett Smith) keeps the peace. But one night Marty bolts and roams the city, and the other three follow, hoping to retrieve him. Through circumstances you would rather not hear about, these four friends—representative New Yorkers—wind up in the jungle of Madagascar. Marty's dream of freedom has come true.

Overcivilized mammals in the tangled wilderness: the comic premise of DreamWorks' new movie is a perfectly feasible one. And the computer animation, which offers shadows and both focussed and unfocussed areas of the frame (just like a real-life film), is often quite beautiful. But "Madagascar," which was directed by Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath, is mismanaged pretty much from start to finish. The filmmakers decided to make the action more cartoonish than that of such recent animated features as "Finding Nemo" and the "Shrek" films, with crashes and collapses and necks and bodies stretched out of shape. But when you resort to slapstick you run into trouble sustaining a full-length narrative. "Madagascar" is only eighty-six minutes long, but a lot of it feels padded. Like children who tell a successful joke, then tell it again, the filmmakers repeat every gag and visual trope three times. The picture takes forever to get going and then stalls repeatedly. On the beach at Madagascar, Marty and his friends hassle one another for a long time. At last, they pull themselves together and go into the interior, where they meet the natives—lemurs, led by King Julien XIII (Sacha Baron Cohen, a.k.a. Ali G.)—and they get a taste of the unspeakable Foosas, hyena-like creatures who scare everybody to death. But then, after all that, the New Yorkers go back to the beach and start wrangling all over again. This zebra does too much horsing around.

The classic shape of a children's tale, as I recall it from reading a million of them to my boys, consists of removing a child or an animal from a situation of safety, placing him in danger, and then resolving the tensions and returning him to safety. "Madagascar" seems to offer the right dangers—the four friends will never get their Sunday *Times* and bagels in the wild. In response, they could have used their peculiar New York skills to deal with the creeping and crawling terrors of the great outdoors—and the premise would have worked out in a way that was both scary and funny. But nothing like that happens. When the kvetching New Yorkers hit the jungle, a few cobwebs cling to Alex, the hyenas turn out to be pussycats, and that's it. Great visuals, lousy plot. After you see "Madagascar," you start to think that the movies are being dumbed down even for small children. ♦

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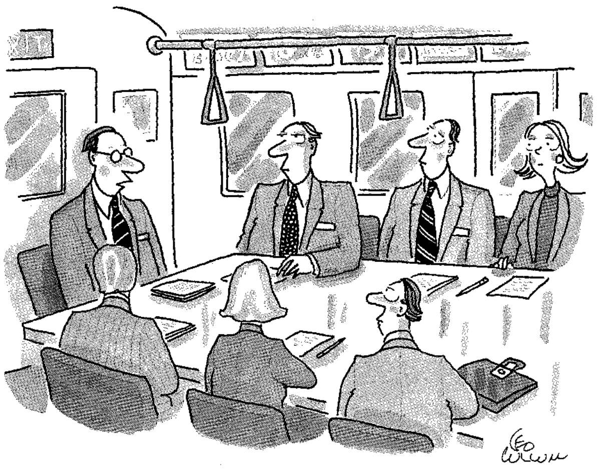
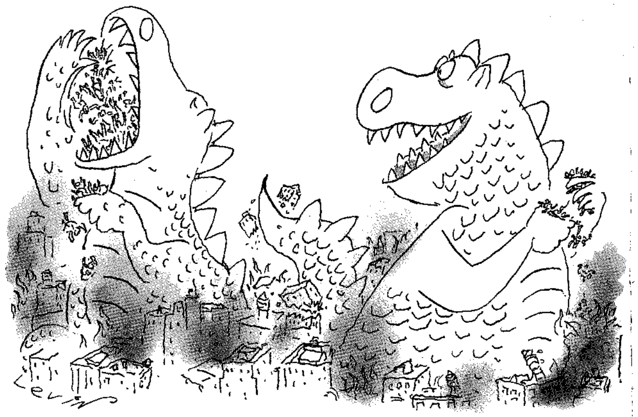
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Edward Koren, must be received by Sunday, May 29th. Finalists in the May 16th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 13th & 20th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

WINNING CAPTION



"This is my stop. Phil, you'll be C.E.O. till Sixty-third Street."
Lewis Gatlin, Elizabeth City, N.C.



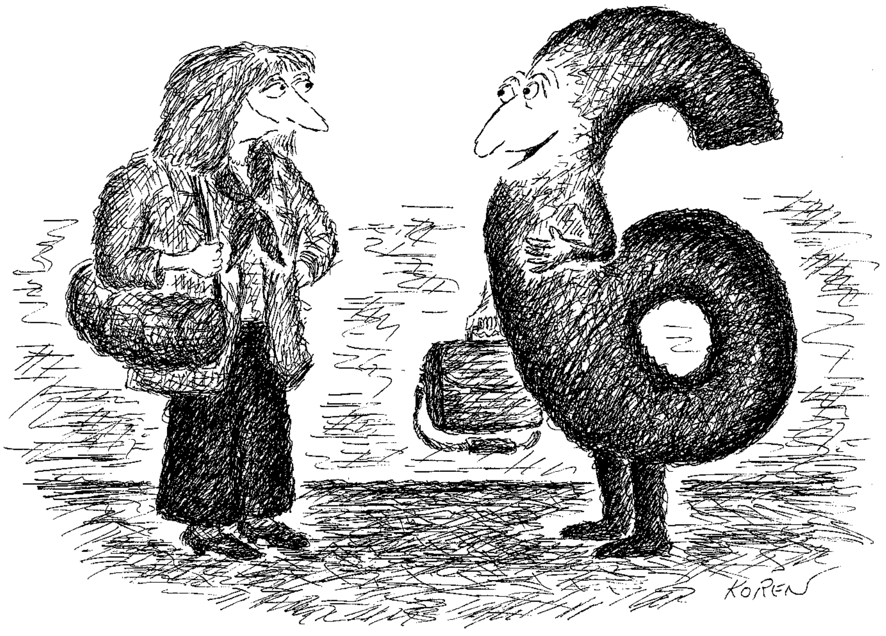
THE FINALISTS

"Remember that time you made me laugh and people came out of my nose?"
David Markham, Charlotte, N.C.

"Pass me a beer truck."
Paul Zinder, Westminster, Md.

"How about Little Italy for dessert?"
Marcella De Simone, Jackson, N.J.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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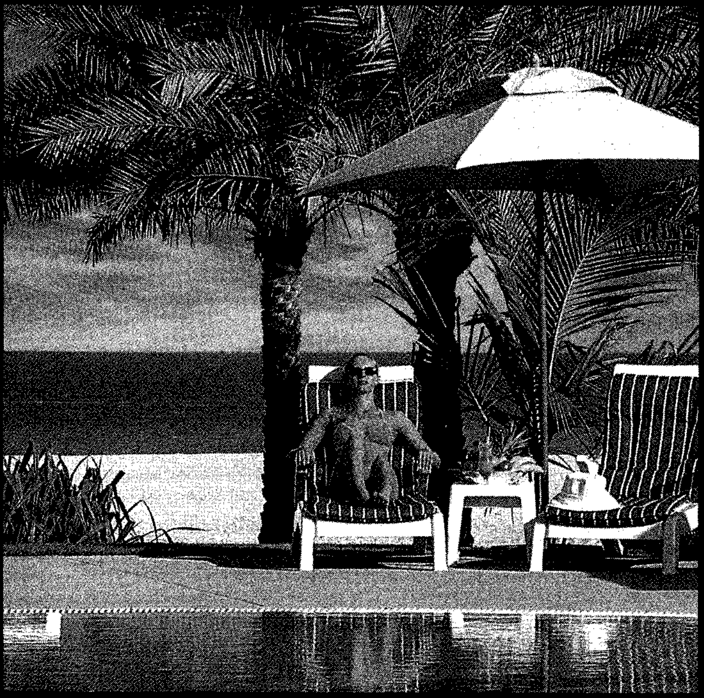
Your signature wish.



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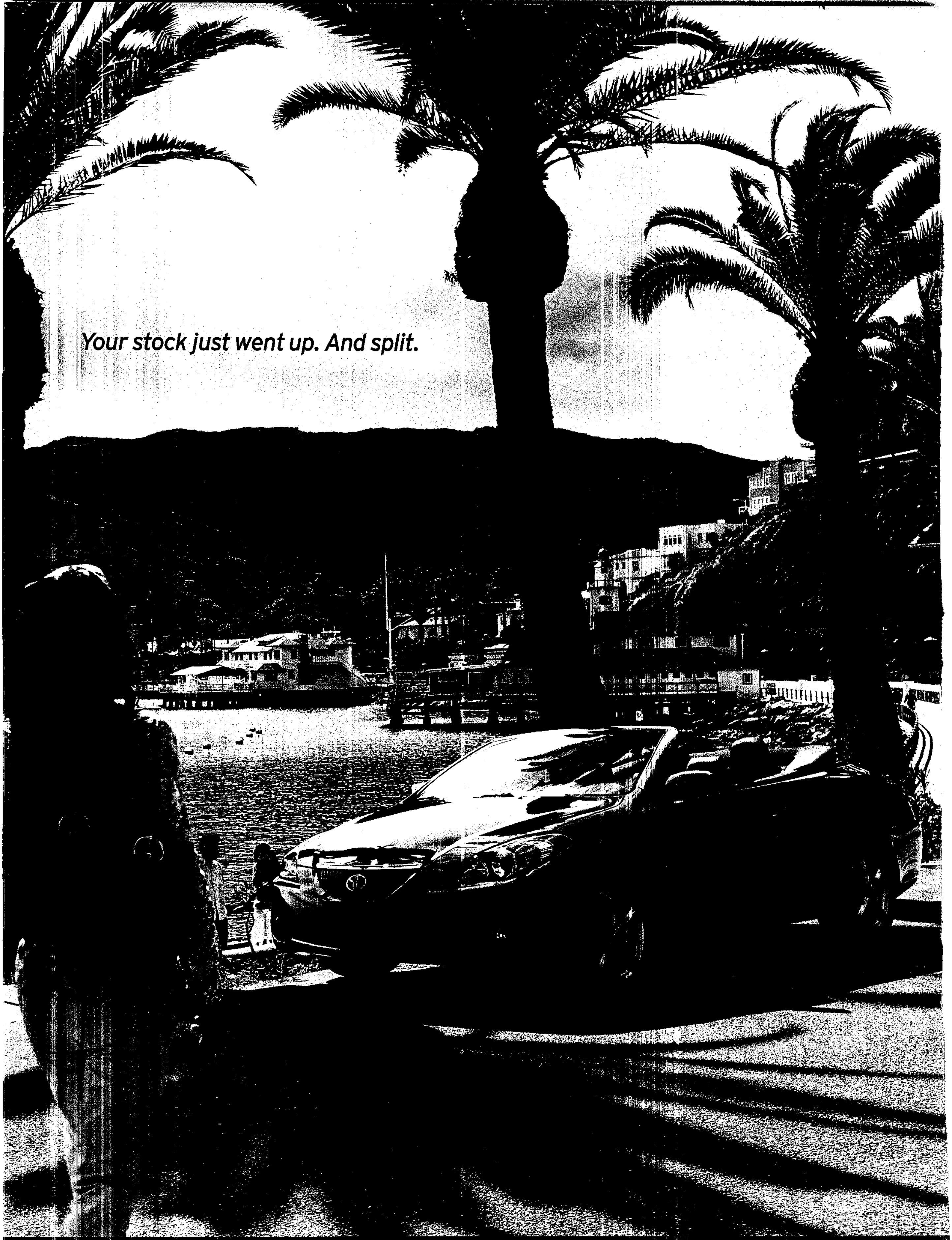

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